

# **For Reference**

---

**NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM**

Ex libris  
UNIVERSITATIS  
ALBERTAENSIS





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2020 with funding from  
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/Lysyshyn1971>









THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THOMAS OTWAY'S TRAGIC VISION

by



RALPH JAMES LYSYSHYN

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1971





THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "THOMAS OTWAY'S TRAGIC VISION", submitted by RALPH JAMES LYSYSHYN in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

July 9



## ABSTRACT

Since Thomas Otway's popularity reached its peak in the mid-eighteenth century, it has declined to the point where Otway is seldom read, and played only rarely. His decline has been the result of the reader's and the critic's inability to accept the theatrical and dramatic conventions, and to a large extent, the morality of Restoration tragedy. Yet despite these limitations, Otway's work should still be considered more seriously than it has been in the study of Restoration drama.

Otway's three best plays, Don Carlos, The Orphan, and Venice Preserv'd, all illustrate an authentic tragic vision. Otway finds that man is completely at the mercy of an arbitrary and often cruel fate. Otway's works are therefore marked by an air of pessimism that borders on despair. Fate's dominion is illustrated by its ability to crush men through no fault of their own. Otway's characters are often caught in completely ambiguous dilemmas. Tragedy is inevitable, no matter what choice is made.

Otway includes all men in this tragic vision. This inclusiveness is achieved by presenting characters, situations and dialogue, which are easily identified with those which Otway's Restoration audience would see around them and in Restoration comedy.

Otway's use of comic devices gives his works an air of reality that heightens the effect of his tragic vision, and classifies Otway with the greatest writers of Restoration drama-- the writers of comedy rather than the writers of tragedy.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
CHAPTER I . . . . .	1
CHAPTER II . . . . .	10
CHAPTER III . . . . .	29
CHAPTER IV . . . . .	58
CHAPTER V . . . . .	77
NOTES . . . . .	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	90



## CHAPTER I

If Thomas Otway had to live today on the proceeds from the production and publication of his plays, it is unlikely that his fate would be any different from what it was in 1685: he would still die of starvation. Time has not been kind to Otway's reputation, and he is now known only to those literary scholars who interest themselves in Restoration Drama. Today, success upon the stage and financial success are very closely related, but in the late seventeenth century this was not the case. Otway himself is our best illustration of the fact that financial success was not necessarily a result of the fame and popularity of a dramatist's plays. In 1685 Otway was at least able to find consolation in the knowledge (if knowledge can ever console a starving man) that he was a respected dramatist; today, even this would be denied him.

Alcibiades, Otway's first dramatic work, met with limited success and Otway found favour in the eyes of the Duke of York, who allowed Otway to kiss his hand:

For you were not only so indulgent to bestow Your  
Praises on this [Don Carlos] but ev'n (beyond my  
hopes) to declare in favour of my first Essay of  
nature, and add yet the encouragement of your  
commands to go forward, when I had the honour to  
kiss Your Royal Highnesses hand in token of your  
permission to make a Dedication to You of the  
second.<sup>1</sup>

It was this second play, Don Carlos, that brought Otway his greatest monetary success:









succeeded in driving Romeo and Juliet from the stage for almost fifty years,<sup>6</sup> even though Otway did not even attempt to disguise the plagiarism - "Marius, Marius, wherefore art thou Marius?" (Caius Marius, II, i, 267).

The Orphan, in 1680, was Otway's next great success after Don Carlos. This play, and Venice Preserv'd, which was written in 1682, were often ranked among the three greatest plays of the age by Otway's contemporaries. It was these two plays that were mainly responsible for Otway's reputation in his life time and in the succeeding centuries. Otway, himself, wrote of The Orphan: "The world has been so kind to me to judge of this poem to my advantage, as the most pardonable fault which I have made in its kind" (Orphan, Dedication, 5-7). Venice Preserv'd underwent two revivals within five months after its first appearance.<sup>7</sup>

Yet for all his popularity, Otway was continually in need of money. The only exception seems to have been the period immediately after Don Carlos. The reason for this is simple; theatre audiences were small, especially when judged by Modern or Elizabethan standards. They were composed mainly of the difficult-to-please nobility and town wits. The dramatist profited only from every third performance, and these were not frequent. In some cases plays did not survive the first night. Downes, it will be remembered, considered the 10 nights of Don Carlos very exceptional.

The Restoration was a callous age, and although it respected Otway's work, it watched without sympathy as he starved: "Otway can hardly Guts from Jayl preserve/ For though he's very fat he's like to starve."<sup>8</sup> This was not an isolated barb, showing only its author's



cruelty; it had its counterparts:

Lett Otway tumble Shadwell from the Stage  
 Otway who long (leane Loyalty preserving)  
 Has showne a wonder and growne fat w<sup>th</sup> starving.<sup>9</sup>

After his death, and probably because now he did not have to be fed; Otway was treated with less cynicism and much franker admiration of his work. Shortly after Otway's death Robert Gould praised him in these terms:

But thee, my Otway, from the Grave I'll raise,  
 And crown thy memory with lasting praise;  
 Thy Orphan, nay thy Venice too shall stand,  
 And live as long as the Sea defends our Land.<sup>10</sup>

The following years produced much similar praise of Otway, but it was Dryden who formed the basis for most of the later criticism. Dryden wrote:

I will not defend everything in his Venice Preserv'd but I must bear this testimony to his memory that the passions are truly touched in it, though perhaps there is somewhat to be desired both in the grounds of them and in the height and elegance of expression; but nature is there, which is the greatest beauty.<sup>11</sup>

Dryden saw both sides of Otway's work, but for the next fifty years only Otway's sentimental treatment of the passions was remembered and early in the eighteenth century he came to be referred to as "Tender Otway." Samuel Johnson is reported to have said of Otway, "he is all tenderness."<sup>12</sup>

Otway's natural style must also be mentioned in dealing with his tenderness. The heights of emotion reached by Otway were





directly attributable to his style:

Otway, who was a perfect master of the tragic passions, everywhere draws them with that natural simplicity here recommended by the Essay [Dryden's "A Parallel Betwixt Painting and Poetry"]; and therefore he never fails to raise strong emotions in the soul. Mr. Dryden who affects a quite different style which is condemned by the Essay, seldom or never touches the passions ... .<sup>13</sup>

The naturalness and tenderness in his works made Otway extremely popular in the early eighteenth century. This popularity can be easily seen in the numerous editions of his works; Otway was obviously widely read. By the time the collected works were first published in 1712, The Orphan had been published in seven editions (1680, 1685, 1691, 1696, 1703, 1705, 1711), Venice Preserv'd in three (1682, 1696, 1704), and Don Carlos in five (1676, 1679, 1686, 1695, 1704). After the first edition of the collected works Otway underwent six more editions before the end of the century (1718, 1722, 1728, 1736, 1757, and 1768).<sup>14</sup> Eventually, however, Otway's great tenderness was also his downfall. It came to be regarded as such a dominant aspect of his work that all the other qualities were ignored. A necessary sense of balance was destroyed. The emotions became over emphasized, especially in the acting of the parts. Critics came to see them as morbid and repulsive. For example, Jaffeir, in Venice Preserv'd was accused of having an "uxorious temper."<sup>15</sup> It is easy to call Otway over-emotional, for some scenes seem to have no purpose other than to wring tears from the audience: "There is indeed, rather too much of the tearful element in Otway. We might almost say of tear-mongering. His sentimentality is not confined to love, and he may be accused of



having opened the door to the worst kind of maudlin whimpering ... ."16

But whether or not this is valid criticism is another question. Perhaps critics who succumb to it are overly sentimental themselves. In any case they are not as callous as Otway's theatre patrons were. Even if we do find Otway too sloppy for our tastes we must not be blind to the virtues. William Hazlitt who saw a "mawkishness" in the plays had to admit:

Yet there are lines and passages in it of extreme tenderness and beauty; and few persons, I conceive (judging from my own experience) will read it at a certain time of life without shedding tears over it as fast as the "Arabian trees their medicinal gums!" Otway always touched the reader, for he had himself a heart.<sup>17</sup>

After a time Otway came to be charged with the same literary crime as most Restoration dramatists have been charged with -- immorality. Elwin, writing in 1928,<sup>18</sup> found it necessary to go to great lengths to answer charges of immorality in Restoration Drama. Some critics have found Monimia's speech "smutty and sometimes Prophanes," and Chamont's treatment of the Chaplain irreverent. Others found that the bedroom scene in The Orphan "raises ideas too coarse for the Refinement of the Tragic Muse."<sup>19</sup> But these judgements on Otway's morality, like the attacks on his tear - mongering, are based on values that have little to do with any of Otway's experiences. Since Otway wrote to please the audiences of his age, he reflects its values.

It is a commonplace of literary criticism that a great piece of art will transcend the limitations of changing tastes and will appeal



to all ages. Too often this argument is forwarded to defend and uphold the judgements of critics, who find they cannot see the value of a piece of art which was once acclaimed, when the real problem is not the lack of merit in the work under consideration, but the critic's ignorance. The fate of Otway's works has been the result of criticism which fails to see the realism of the tragic vision conveyed by his works, which must be approached with an understanding and an acceptance of the age. This failure is the result of making judgements in terms of the critics' own sense of right and wrong rather than with one which is relevant to Otway. In seeking to discredit Otway most critics are in fact attacking the age and not the work: "If the moralists seek a quarrel with the Restoration era, they must disintegrate the life not the literature."<sup>20</sup>

This does not necessarily make Otway a first-rate dramatist, even though the eighteenth, and, to some extent, the nineteenth centuries considered him to be, next to Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist of the English language.<sup>21</sup> Otway achieved this reputation mainly because of the frequency with which his plays were revived. It was not until 1898 that Otway's rank was seriously challenged. Saintsbury claimed that it was "fortunate ... that the validity of these praises is not often tested by reading."<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Otway's reputation suffers considerably in reading, especially when compared to Shakespeare. "The standards of literature imposed upon drama crushed to death plays whose true life was in the 'soul of lively action' and in actors who embodied forth behind the footlights."<sup>23</sup>

In the end it was not Otway who lost currency but the



Restoration: "when at last it [Venice Preserv'd] succumbed, it was neither to literary criticism nor to waning republican sentiment, but to forces far more sinister for many of the established favorites of the stage: the growing distaste for the heroic."<sup>24</sup> People ceased to see the reality, the tenderness, and the naturalism of Otway's work. They saw only tear-mongering, mawkishness, and immorality. It is not likely that Otway will ever be popular again, but then he never sought to be, except with the small group of the English elite, who patronized the theater in his time and upon whose initial reaction so much depended:

Yonder's the Poet sick behind the Scenes:  
 He told me there was pity in my face  
 And therefore sent me here to make his peace  
 Let me for once persuade ye to be kind  
 But now if by my Suit you'll not be won,  
 You know what your unkindness oft has done.  
 I'll e'n forsake the Play-House, and turn Nun.

(D.C., Epilogue)

We have moved too far away from the ideals and behaviour of the Restoration to be able to accept the work of Otway, or most other Restoration dramatists, on a level with Shakespeare, Jonson, or more recently with Shaw or Wilde. The change has not been simply in style, manner and morality; it has been technical as well. It has not always been to our benefit:

We have lost an art, as distinct from that of the modern stage as sculpture is from painting. By reducing the play into a two dimensional stage, by improving acoustics so that elaborate and formal declamation is no longer a necessity, by flooding the stage with light so that the slightest movement may pass across the footlights, and finally by over-rationalizing the audience we have erected a barrier that forbids retrogression. It is not





all pure profit our actors in their pursuit of subtlety within the picture have lost the magnificent sweep of gesture and the operatic use of the vocal cords.<sup>25</sup>

This barrier has also resulted in a loss of our objectivity, our ability to see the thing for what it is rather than evaluating it with our own criteria. As a result we have forgotten Otway and lumped his work with the rest of Restoration tragedy which we ignore. We are "ungrateful" enough to "deny him those shining qualities he had, that reality of passion in which he exceeded nearly all (one might well risk all) his contemporaries."<sup>26</sup>

It is the aim of this study to consider Otway's qualities objectively. Instead of trying to evaluate his work, a pursuit in which it is difficult to remain objective, the main purpose of this study will be to attempt to define the nature and realism of Otway's tragic vision. The focus will be on The Orphan and Venice Preserv'd, because of their popularity over the years, and also on Don Carlos because of its immediate popularity.



## CHAPTER II

A knowledge of the relationship of Otway's work to his society, and to the drama which that society created, is central to a true appreciation of Otway's tragic vision. No artist creates in a vacuum, and Otway is not an exception. Yet, Otway's responses to his age and to the theatrical tradition in which he worked, although understandable and easily accounted for, are unique. Otway's tragic vision is a direct result of the tragedy of his own life acting on the influences of his age and Restoration drama.

To assert that Otway's work is simply the result of the influences of his society would be far too simplistic. This statement would also be insulting to Otway as a creative artist. Nor is a highly sophisticated psychological analysis of Otway or his work particularly helpful. Instead, in order to appreciate the validity of Otway's vision and also its uniqueness, I will first discuss the age and its drama. I shall also discuss the main reason for Otway's uniqueness -- the despair that must have been created by his life.

There exist two stereotyped but contradictory summaries of the Restoration age. The first cliché, and by far the more exciting, tells of an age of degenerate, immoral, and highly sexed rakes, who spent their time pursuing, and catching, equally talented and liberated women. The second cliché admits that these existed, but relegates the importance of this happy life to be background, arguing that religious tracts of the time far outnumber the bawdy poems, and that the majority of the people were highly religious, very moralistic, and not



at all given to frivolity and gaiety. However, this staid majority of the people of Restoration England never went to plays; nor did they comprise a very significant portion of the English upper class to which Otway aspired. For the purpose, then, of discussing Otway's social milieu, it is more appropriate to deal with the world of rakes and prostitutes, who made up the audience that Otway sought to please. It was against the values of this audience that Otway reacted.

The Restoration provides not only for the literary historian, but for all historians, a clear, and more importantly a conscious, break with the past. Charles II, with his own example of materialism, opportunism and lechery, led this change, with the result that "decency and piety were discredited as sure signs of hypocrisy and fanaticism."<sup>1</sup> Instead, the age turned to frankness, and claimed the absence of pretence as its dominant virtue. Although this may have countered hypocrisy, it created cynicism and an overt movement toward total licence. The age found it preferable to be openly immoral rather than to be virtuous, and thus risk being termed hypocritical. This lack of restraint pervaded both speech and action. Because of the King's example, "to be debauched was the easiest way of clearing one's self of suspicion of disloyalty."<sup>2</sup>

In this world any culture was of dubious value. The young gallant who sought to be accepted by the society of the time had very little education, or else he hid it well. It was believed that a university education did not lead to wit or gentility, but instead created pedants. As a result, the quest for worldly success took a different direction:





The emphasis tended to fall on those accomplishments which could be naturally acquired by merely living in affluence among one's social equals: on easy deportment and gay, unforced conversation; on dress; on the ability to manage an intrigue or fight a duel; on the authority that could command the instant compliance and respect of coachmen, chairmen, drawers, watchmen, and the lower orders in general.<sup>3</sup>

Society became totally cynical, and Charles was not alone in his belief that there was neither sincerity nor chastity in the world. The citizens of that age sought only to indulge themselves. They found that this was most pleasurable done sexually. Love and sex became divorced, as sex became subject to the same analytical reasoning as everything else was. Restoration society, trying to "rationalize human relationships,"<sup>4</sup> found that love was an ideal; but man, because he was licentious, could not always take the time to include it in his adventures. Once this view is accepted, the pursuit of sex "must be an acknowledged amusement."<sup>5</sup>

To a certain extent this great freedom was a reaction against the restrictions of the Commonwealth. King Charles and his followers were determined to enjoy all that had previously been denied to them: "Instead of whipping actors at the cart-tail, they received the women as mistresses; and instead of forbidding all plays however innocent, they encouraged all however indecent."<sup>6</sup> This reaction led to a demi-monde of debauched and completely self-centered individuals. The gallant who sought to seduce a woman had to impress her with both his appearance and his wit. To achieve this he went to the theatre.

The pit of the Restoration theatre was filled with those who came not so much to see the play, but rather to be seen themselves. The



theatres, seldom full, drew their audiences from "the men and women of fashion who adorned or had an entrée to the Court, army officers, Inns-of-Court men, wits, critics, beaux and fops, sparks and bullies, kept mistresses and women of the town."<sup>7</sup>

Montague Summers tells of how "the critics and the gallants crowded the pit, which was more often than not the sphere of rowdiest licence and quarrels that led to brawls and duelling."<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising that violence often erupted, for the young gallants often came to the theatre immediately after dining and wining too well. The resulting intoxication, coupled with the fierce business of pursuing "the ladies of easy virtue [who] crowded the theatre as their own happy hunting-ground,"<sup>9</sup> could easily lead to quarrels. In fact, Otway himself became involved in at least one duel at the theatre: "Churchill, for beating an orange-wench in the Duke's playhouse, was challenged by Capt. Otway (the poet), and were both wounded but Churchill most."<sup>10</sup>

The best place to be seen in the Restoration theatre was, of course, nearest the stage, for it was here that the centre of activity really was: "The hub of all the turmoil and clamour, the wit and the obscenity that passed for wit in the Restoration Theatre, was Fop corner, a portion of the house nearest the stage, a hornet's nest of malice and scandal where the fair-pated beaux and snarling critics clustered and buzzed and stung."<sup>11</sup> Thus, the first task of a dramatist was to get the attention of his audience from the escapades off the stage. This was not always easy, as many found the pit more attractive and entertaining than the stage: "Tis the pleasant'st Thing in the whole World to see a Flock of wild Gallants fluttering



about two or three ladies in Vizard Masks, and then they talk to 'em so wantonly, and so loud, that they put the very Players out of countenance -- 'Tis a better entertainment than any Part of the Play can be."<sup>12</sup> Even once the audience's attention was gained, the playwright still had to contend with the chatter in the boxes which his play would create among the wits who were determined to prove themselves at the expense of the dramatist. Even such a serious playgoer as Pepys seems to have spent as much time watching the audience as he did the play. His favourite seat was chosen because it gave him the opportunity of "seeing and hearing the great people, which may be pleasant when there is good store."<sup>13</sup> Pepys recounts how Sir Charles Sedley interrupted his enjoyment of the play The Maid's Tragedy; Pepys forgives him, for his wit made up for the loss of the play. Pepys' entry for February 18, 1667 reads in part:

Vexed all the while with two talking ladies and Sir Charles Sedley; yet pleased to hear their discourse . . . . He was mighty witty and she [one of the ladies] also making sport with him very inoffensively, that a more pleasant rencontre I never heard. But by that means lost the pleasure of the play wholly, to which now and then Sir Charles Sedley's exceptions against both words and pronouncing were very pretty.<sup>14</sup>

The Restoration dramatist, such as Otway, had not only to contend with this audience; he had to satisfy it as well. "At no other period has that class which Matthew Arnold was to call 'Barbarians' -- a class marked by 'high spirits, choice manners, and distinguished bearing,' but also (Arnold thought) by 'an insufficiency of light' -- played such a dominant part in the creation and control of English Literature."<sup>15</sup> The King himself took a marked interest in the theatre, and set the example for his followers to patronize similarly the play-





wrights and the theatre. Thus the dramatist, if he sought the patronage of this class, as Otway among others clearly did, had to be sure to please it. The pleas for an audience's attention and sympathy which abound in the Prologues and Epilogues of Restoration plays were not superfluous trappings or a useless convention; they were sincere cries of playwrights who knew "what your [the audience's] unkindness oft has done" (D.C. Epilogue, 18).

Audiences were always ready to express their opinions about a play, and they did not hesitate to do so emphatically. Many plays, some deservedly, were hissed completely off the stage, while on other occasions actors would be pelted with oranges.<sup>16</sup> In such a situation the question "Is there amongst you no good Nature?" (Orphan, Epilogue, 6) becomes very relevant and important to the dramatist, even if, as often as not, the answer is "No."

Any dramatist who had written solely to please his own ideals, and with a view towards art which did not satisfy his audience, would have been ignored in favour of one who knew how to please the tastes, such as they were, of his audience. Still, it was considered to be to the advantage of the dramatist that he had such frequent contact with the nobility. Even Dryden criticized the Elizabethans because he found that "'they wanted the benefit of converse' with upperclass society."<sup>17</sup>

Because these "barbarians" so completely controlled the theatre and because they were so crude, so sexually oriented, and so ego-centric in their tastes, there is little need to wonder at the coarseness of the comedy or the cant and absurdity of the heroic





drama. Instead, the strangeness lies in the subtlety and true wit that some of the masterpieces do contain.<sup>18</sup>

Restoration comedy, like all comedy, has as its prime purpose the entertainment of its audience. For the modern reader it is possible to regard the bulk of Restoration comedies in two ways. First, it can be seen as immoral, being given over to the glorification of adultery and lewdness. On the other hand, it can be viewed as being highly moralistic, dedicated to putting down affectation, foolishness and "all that was not easy and graceful."<sup>19</sup> Neither of these views is completely correct, nor is it entirely wrong. It is true that the comedies satirize pretence, foppery and hypocrisy, and they also satirize failure. But this is not enough to make the plays moralistic, for they fail to satirize vice, if it is devoid of these failures and pretences, and is instead marked by wit and gracefulness. Like their audiences, "the dramatists cynically admire nothing but success, and satirize nothing but failure -- failure to be graceful, failure to be witty, and failure in savoir faire, but not failure to be virtuous."<sup>20</sup>

Instead of criticizing the morals of the day, Restoration comedy reinforced them. It always ensured a reward for the graceful and witty, no matter how vicious they might be, and ridiculed and dismissed the fops and the pretentious. In doing this the comedy avoided confronting the question of virtue, and retreated to safe ground by flattering its audience, the members of which probably saw themselves as wits rather than fops.

In order to achieve its purpose, which seemed to be simply



to please rather than anything else, Restoration comedy relied upon a stock set of characters. First, there is the hero, a man of true wit, charm, gracefulness, and, of course, great sexual prowess; a man such as Horner in The Country Wife, Dorimant in The Man of Mode or Mirabelle in The Way of the World. There is also a heroine, the woman of talent equal to the hero's except that she tends to be rather less generous with herself than either the hero or the other women in the play. The heroine is likely to be called Harriet or Millamant or Miranda, as contrasted with the other women, who bear names such as Mrs. Loveit or Mrs. Wishfort.

The plot usually centres on the hero's pursuit of the heroine. He normally takes the time to seduce a woman or two along the way, thus providing for that part of the comedy which centres on the all-too-willing women. Although the heroine usually disapproves of the hero's behaviour, this does not, in the end, prevent her from submitting to him. The submission is often to marriage, which is not removed from Restoration comedy. However, the emphasis tends to be on the pleasures of marriage rather than on the limitations, which are often shown by the plays to be non-existent. In the course of winning the heroine, the hero often has to compete with a fop such as Sir Foppling Flutter of The Man of Mode, or, at times, he makes a cuckold either of the fop, or of his equivalent. The fops and the cuckolds are often would-be wits, who serve as foils to the hero and his companions, who are all wits themselves.

The characters in Restoration comedy are judged by their relationship to the hero. If they help him, they are admired;



but if they hinder him or contradict the values which he represents, they are ridiculed. The virtue of the hero's actions is never questioned, neither are his means, nor are they relevant to the judgement of the hero. Thus in The Country Wife no character is as vicious or as devious as Horner, who is still the most admired character of the play.

Every Restoration comedy does not, of course, follow this exact pattern. Wits and fools, cuckolds and clowns, are added or removed as the action of the plays require. However, these generalizations are accurate enough to convey the general directions that Restoration comedy took. They can be successfully applied to the masterpieces such as Love for Love, The Country Wife and The Man of Mode, and they can also be applied to minor plays such as Otway's Soldiers Fortune.

Restoration comedies were realistic in that they portrayed the life that was lived by much of the theatre audience. Thus, part of the game that the theatre-goers indulged in was to try to decipher who characters such as Horner and Dorimant "really" were. The audience was able to laugh, because many of the fops and the ladies who should have seen themselves attacked by the comedies, deluded themselves and saw themselves as Dorimants and Harriets and not as Sir Foppling Flutters and Mrs. Loveits. Nevertheless, "realistic, essentially masculine in outlook, always a trifle bitter, comedy cut a little too close to the bone to please many of the women and their attendant fops."<sup>21</sup>

Those who found comedy uncomfortable could take refuge in the heroic drama and tragedy which the Restoration produced. Though





Restoration comedy had been realistic, or at least idealistic only in that it sought to impose an order on the real world by punishing the hypocrites and rewarding the wits: "Restoration tragedy had taken refuge in fantasy, traditionally a comic domain. Faced with the real issues of the age ... it retreated in confusion to a land of rhetorical make-believe."<sup>22</sup> Comedy degraded women, telling them they were seldom more than pawns or objects for the likes of Horner. "Tragedy on the other hand, flattered exactly those romantic notions and grandiose dreams of the self which comedy set out to deflate. It loosed no arrows of mockery at the inhabitants of Fop's Corner; it consistently assured women that they were beings enskied and sainted, that virtue reaped a sure reward, and that love was the conqueror of time."<sup>23</sup>

The reasons for the wide discrepancy between comedy and tragedy cannot be simply accounted for by the intention to appeal to different segments of the audience. Nor does it help to argue that tragedy was a reaction against the age. It is probably true that the tragedy is an idealization of the age. The exotic world of the tragedy was what the Restoration would have liked itself to be.

The heroes of Restoration tragedies live in a world of absolutes. A series of blacks and whites confront the heroes, who, because of their honour and their devotion to their lovers, are able to emerge from the fray completely victorious. The heroes in their conflicts range through the entire spectrum of emotions, but they generally are at the extremes of love, hate or despair. Because of this high pitch of emotion the heroes very seldom show any great amount of intelligence. In emerging from his trial the Restoration hero seldom undergoes a catharsis and is improved. Seldom does he make





an error that has the catastrophic results which Elizabethan tragedy depicts. The result is that much of the conflict that a Restoration hero faces becomes artificial. Anything he suffers is an injustice rather than the result of poetic justice.

The artificiality of emotions in Restoration tragedy is the result of the dramatist's coming to have a higher regard for success and public acclaim than for artistic integrity. Audiences rated tragedies not on whether or not they were convincing, but on whether or not wonder and admiration were raised. As a result the tragedy abounds in drums and trumpets, battles and murders, all intended to gain complete control over the minds of the spectators. This, of course, resulted in a great many extravagances as dramatists sought to browbeat the audience into believing in what was happening on the stage. Restoration dramatists never sought to imitate nature, but rather believed that the more theatrical a play became, the better it served its purpose. The audiences could be and were attracted by great spectacles rather than by authentic emotion.

Because these plays concern themselves with love and valour, heroes are subjected to almost farcical situations, when, after having defied the gods, braved their enemies and conquered kingdoms, they are made to wilt at the feet of their lovers as soon as these ladies show the slightest sign of scorn. The credibility of the emotions is further strained by the false conflict between love and honour which is imposed on so many works. This assumption that love and honour are not compatible hardly helps raise the dignity of Restoration tragedy.



Of Sir Robert Howard's The Great Favourite or, the Duke of Larma, which is concerned with issues which have some sense of reality, James Sutherland says, "There is little reason to believe that it hit the taste of the town."<sup>24</sup> But this was one of what Sutherland considers the age's better plays. Dryden's All for Love also shows a sensitive treatment of feeling, but it was an exception even when compared with the rest of Dryden's work. Dobrée finds that generally Dryden wrote, not to portray feeling, "but to make a thing."<sup>25</sup>

Despite their widely diversified aims, the comedy and tragedy of the Restoration period find a common ground in their underlying confidence in man. The comedy believes that man is capable of becoming a gentleman and a wit, and also that fortune will reward him. Tragedy complements comedy in that it believes that man can be honourable and virtuous, and again that fortune will reward the deserving. Both believe that man can be happy and successful. It is on this point that Otway's tragedy differs most radically from the bulk of the drama of the Restoration. Otway's works are marked by an overshadowing pessimism that borders very closely on nihilism: Don Carlos is fated to die from the outset of the play, regardless of what choice he makes; Jaffeir has no choice open to him; he must wrong either Pierre or Belvidera; Castalio suffers because of an accident - his brother overhears a conversation. When his life is considered, it is easy to understand why Otway would become disillusioned with the world. Throughout his life Otway seemed to have been a misfit or an outsider. He appears to have reached only the fringes of anything to which he aspired.

The son of Humphrey Otway, a church rector, Otway was born



on March 3, 1652 at Milland, a hamlet in the parish of Trotton, Sussex.<sup>26</sup>  
 The family was not poor, as Humphrey's parish included at least one good living. However, there seems to have been no other income, and the family's security was tied to Humphrey's various livings.

The next definite trace of Thomas Otway is the appearance of his name at the bottom of a list of forty-one scholarship candidates at Winchester College in 1665. The list is in order of preference, and as only twenty scholarships were available, Otway was not successful. The next year Otway's name does not appear on the list, but reappears in 1667; again Otway did not earn a scholarship. Finally, in 1668, he was admitted as a commoner, after having again failed to win a scholarship. By the next year, at age 17, Otway was too old to be admitted as a scholar at the school, so he left for Oxford in May of 1669. Obviously Otway was not among the top students, but he does claim some distinction as a student. In "Poet's Complaint of his Muse" Otway tells of his ability at debate:

The Sages that instructed me in Arts  
 And Knowledge oft would praise my Parts,  
 And cheer my Parants longing hearts.  
     When I was called to a Dispute  
     My fellow - Pupils oft stood mute.

(56-60)

(This praise could well have been at an early stage in his life, and does not necessarily reflect on Otway's career at Oxford, as Ghosh implies.)

Otway left Oxford before he was of sufficient standing to receive a degree. His departure was probably the result of financial troubles that followed from his father's death in 1671. Otway's lack





of a degree was to cause some confusion later, as in 1680 he was awarded an M.A. from Cambridge. This degree was intended to grant to "Thomas Otway of Christ Church, Oxford, the same degree, rank, and standing 'as he held' at Oxford."<sup>27</sup> It is most likely that in London Otway claimed that he held his M.A. from Oxford, and that the Cambridge degree was conferred as an honour.

The death of Humphrey, as well as causing Otway to leave Oxford, seems to have depressed him. In the "Poet's Complaint," after describing the "deadly Potion" of his father's death, Otway describes his reaction:

From thence sad Discontent, uneasy Fears,  
And anxious Doubts of what I had to do,  
Grew with succeeding Years.  
The World was wide, but whither should I go?  
I, whose blooming Hopes all wither'd were,  
Who'd little fortune, and a deal of Care?

(73-78)

Otway went to London and became caught up in the world of the coffee-houses and the theatres. He sought to compete with all the fops and wits. Later Otway admitted that this was not a very profitable life: "On every sort of Vanity I fed" ("Poet's Complaint," 89). Here, in London, Otway tried his hand at acting. He was not very successful. Of his role in The Forc'd Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom, Downes wrote: "Note, In this play, Mr. Otway the Poet having an Inclination to turn Actor; Mrs. Behn gave him the King in the Play, for a Probation Part, but he being not us'd to the Stage; the full House put him to such a Sweat and Tremendous Agony, being dash't spoilt him for an Actor."<sup>28</sup> It is not known if this was Otway's only venture upon the





stage, but the number of references such as Rochester's:

But Apollo had seen his Face on the Stage,  
And prudently did not think fit to engage  
The Scum of a Play-House for the Prop of an Age.<sup>29</sup>

seems to indicate otherwise. One performance would hardly have generated as many comments as exist.

The date of this performance is not certain, but it is interesting to note that by this time Otway was already known as a poet. Perhaps Otway had tried his hand at plays long before Alcibiades or he may have gained the reputation among the coffee-house wits. In any case none of the works of this period survives.

As indicated in the previous chapter Otway, had some success with his first plays, but they did little to ease his need for money. In addition he became subject to the taunts of the lampoon writers of the day. Otway, obviously, took these barbs seriously, as there is record of his having challenged Elkanah Settle to a duel in the mistaken belief that Settle was the author of A Session of the Poets. Such an action, since Otway was not the only poet attacked in the poem, seems to have been an attempt to impress others with his cavalier spirit.

Early in 1678 Otway went abroad to Flanders, with a military commission which he had obtained through Charles Fitz-Charles, Earl of Plymouth. Otway went originally as an ensign, but later in the year received another commission as lieutenant. Nevertheless, within a year Otway was back in London, financially no better off than he had been on leaving it. Otway's misfortune had followed him overseas and had created a peace that resulted in Otway's being disbanded. Later,



in The Soldiers Fortune, Otway wrote, "Fortune made me a Soldier, a Rogue in Red, the grievance of the Nation, Fortune made the peace just when we were on the brink of a War; then Fortune disbanded us, and lost us two Months pay" (I, 187-190). Ghosh asserts that it was only the peace which brought Otway home so soon and not his incompetence as a soldier. Otway's writings, such as the passage just quoted, seem to indicate that this was indeed the case.

Throughout this time Otway seems to have been deeply in love with a woman who did not reciprocate his affection. Legend has it that the woman was the actress Elizabeth Barry. This legend has a nice romantic ring as it was Mrs. Barry who played the roles of Otway's great women: Lavinia, Monimia, and Belvidera. However, the woman is not named in the love letters which survive, and Mrs. Barry's name was not suggested until 1713, by which time Otway's work was sufficiently popular to make for a good legend to link him with the greatest actress of the age.

Regardless of the lady's exact identity, one can recognize that Otway was obviously deeply smitten, but in vain. The last love letter indicates the humiliation which Otway must have suffered: "You were pleased to send me word you would meet me in the Mall this Evening, and give me further satisfaction in the Matter you were so unkind to charge me with; I was there, but found you not."<sup>30</sup> Although it is possible to dismiss as rhetorical many of the pleas in Otway's love letters, it is unlikely that one will not be moved by the obvious devotion and agony which they contain. The first letter opens:

My Tyrant!

I Endure too much Torment to be silent, and



have endur'd it too long not to make the severest  
Complaint. I love you, I dote on you; Desire  
makes me mad, when I am near you; and Despair,  
when I am from you. Sure, of all Miseries, Love  
is to me the most intolerable; it haunts me in  
my Sleep, perplexes me when waking; every  
melancholly Thought makes my Fears more powerful;  
and every delightful one makes my Wishes more  
unruly."<sup>31</sup>

It is impossible not to sympathize with "the Unfortunate and (even at  
this time) Weeping Otway"<sup>32</sup> who had to plead with the woman he loved  
to "Think and be Generous"<sup>33</sup> and to "Remember poor Otway."<sup>34</sup>

The last year of Otway's life, the years which produced  
The Orphan, and Venice Preserv'd, could only reinforce in the poet  
the bitterness and disillusion that are so obvious in "The Poet's  
Complaint of his Muse" written in 1680. Two years earlier, in 1678,  
Otway had shown his disenchantment in the Prologue to Friendship in  
Fashion:

Parents all beware  
Cherish and Educate your sons with care;  
Breed 'em to wholesome Law, or give 'em Trades,  
Let 'em not follow th' Muses, they are Jades.

(18-21)

Then in the "Poet's Complaint" Otway tells of falling in love with  
a "deceitful Muse," who promised him greatness and prosperity but  
delivered neither:

Said she, These Riches all, my Darling, shall be thine  
Riches which never Poet had before.  
She promis'd me to raise my fortune and my name  
By Royal Favour, and by endless Fame;  
But never told  
How hard they were to get and difficult to hold.

(116-121)



The completeness of his disillusionment with the benefits which could be gained from poetry and from the royal patronage which should accompany it, is illustrated by the fact that in 1681 Otway dedicated The Soldiers Fortune not to a member of the nobility as was customary, but to Mr. Bentley his stationer. Otway's reason was simple; the stationer deserved it, since he at least paid for the copy:

And am I not a little proud that it has happened  
into my thoughts to be the first who in these  
latter years, has made an Epistle Dedicatory to  
his Stationer: It is a Compliment as reasonable  
as Just. For Mr. Bentley, you pay honestly for  
the Copy; ... when to a Person of higher Rank  
and Order, it looks like an obligation for Praises  
which he knows he does not deserve, and therefore  
is very unwilling to part with ready Money for.

(Dedication, 10-20)

Otway's disillusionment did not stop with the theatre, but extended to the society. In his poem Otway refers to "the nauseous Follies of the buzzing Town" ("Poet's Complaint," 8) and criticizes the standards that are used for the judgement of men:

To Britains great Metropolis I stray'd  
Where Fortune's generall Game is play'd;  
Where Honesty and Wit are often prais'd  
But Fools and Knaves are fortunate and rais'd.

(79-82)

Not surprisingly, Otway also complained of the treatment which he had received from fortune, and we have seen that in his life he had good reason to claim:

For I ne'r liv'd in Fortune's grace,  
She always turn'd her Back, and fled from me a pace  
And never once vouchsaf'd to let me see her Face.

(206-208)







The only records of the last years of Otway's life are those which show his debts. His disillusionment grew to the point where, probably around 1682, Otway who had given the world *Monimia*, *Lavinia* and *Belvidera*, was ready to lose faith in women: "I may hereafter, for your sake, either bless all your bewitching Sex; or as often as I henceforth think of you, curse Womankind forever."<sup>35</sup> Thus Otway, by the end of his life, had lost faith in his own talent, in the world and in life. The many legends which describe his death have all one point in common--Otway was penniless. He was probably in hiding from his creditors, and more than likely, died of starvation.

It is quite logical that Otway's tragedies should also be expected to show his disillusionment with life, and indeed they do. The dramas also illustrate Otway's disenchantment with society. Furthermore, Otway who has so often been praised for the virtue and beauty of his women, shows in his plays that he did not adore them as abjectly as many critics have chosen to believe.

It is not only Otway's pessimism that sets his work apart from the Restoration tragedy of his day. This pessimism ensures that his tragedies have that air of reality and urgency that is found in Restoration comedy but not in tragedy. Otway's pessimism leads him to avoid many of the pitfalls that brought down the lesser poets of the age, and which Dryden avoided only in All for Love.



### CHAPTER III

The extent of Otway's pessimism and disillusion can be seen most clearly when the three major works, Don Carlos, The Orphan, and Venice Preserv'd are considered. All three plays are marked by the lack of justice, the dominance of a fickle, and sometimes evil, fate, and most seriously by the complete absence of hope. The human factor is completely missing from Otway's tragedies in that the tragedy arises out of a situation rather than the characters. The fact is that any character would be destroyed by the situations in which Otway places his characters. This universality greatly increases the pathos; thus the pessimistic nature of Otway's tragic vision is clearly conveyed. Otway's view of man caught in the situations created by fate is so complete that it borders very nearly on despair.

In an article entitled "Otway's Bitter Pessimism"<sup>1</sup> Thomas B. Stroup treats some of the evidence which illustrates Otway's disillusion with man's ability to cope with a fickle fate. Stroup, however, seems to feel that Otway's pessimism is satiric rather than indicative of despondency. Satire implies that man can remedy his faults and also that an alternative exists. This impression is not created by Otway's works. Instead the plays present doomed characters, struggling helplessly against fate. In Otway these characters are too often doomed through no fault of their own for us to be able to consider them satirically.

Stroup deals, at some length, with the irony in Otway's works. However, Otway's irony is more often turned inward, directed at specific situations, and thus kept within the plays. For example,



in Don Carlos the irony of Gomez's statement:

Good Heaven forbid that I should ever dare  
To Question Virtue in a Queen so fair.  
Though she her Eyes cast on her Glorious Sun,  
Men oft see Treasures and yet covet none.

(II, 168-171)

reflects only on his honesty and the gullibility of the King; it does little to the severity of the tragedy in which the King, Don Carlos, and the Queen are inextricably bound. This irony adds to the drama but not to the tragedy. The irony is not, as Stroup seems to suggest, mainly directed towards instructing the audience, except in those situations where Otway is enlarging on his message to include his own society, and even here he appears to be destroying rather than satirizing. Never could the irony in Otway be called "mocking;" it is far too bitter to be so lightly dismissed. The satiric scenes serve their purpose, which is to entertain the audience. These scenes have little real effect on the tragedy. Usually, Otway not only tears down, but he also asserts that reconstruction is futile. Satiric is much too mild an epithet to describe Otway's tragedies.

In Don Carlos Otway's pessimism is seen in the futility of Don Carlos' attempts to find an honourable way out of his dilemma. Caught in the situation where his father, who is also the King, has married the woman Carlos loves, Carlos is unable to reconcile his duty to the woman he loves with the obedience he owes to his father and King. Carlos is completely aware of his predicament, and after describing the situation, he pleads with his friend Posa: "My dearest Posa thou wer't ever kind,/ Bring thy best Counsel and direct my mind"



(I, 81-82). Carlos needs advice, as he has already fallen into a state of despondency which he has been unable to hide from his father ("Why does my Carlos shrowd/ His Joy, and when all's Sunshine wear a Cloud?" (I, 17-18)) or from the Queen and Rui-Gomez. In his despair Carlos becomes reckless with his safety and insults Gomez who is shown to be his enemy. Carlos must be persuaded by Posa of the advantages of an apology which he deems pointless, for he believes "A cruel Father thus destroys his Son" (I, 78), and thus that there is no need for care.

Throughout the play Carlos considers himself to be the victim of fate. Every complication is seen as a "new game of Fate begun" (IV, 159). As the play nears its climax, Carlos finds himself "Run out of breath by Fate" (IV, 345). By the time he dies, Carlos is so completely convinced of the inevitability of his death and of the dominance of fate that he refuses to blame his father, but curses life instead:

Life was my Curse, and giv'n me sure in spight  
Oh had I perish't when I first saw light,  
I never then these miseries had brought  
On you, nor by you had been Guilty thought.

(V, 360-363)

The futility of the situation is shown not only by Carlos' claims, but by his inability to make a choice for either love or obedience. Perhaps it would be better to describe Carlos' dilemma as his inability to choose against either of these virtues than it is to describe it as the necessity of choosing between them. Carlos' virtue works against him with the result that he quickly contradicts any resolution he makes. From his promise to the Queen, "In Obedience





I'll retire" (II, 219), Carlos moves through a second promise, "I've nothing for your Ear/ But what's so pure it might be Offer'd there" (II, 225-226), to the point where he makes love to her again. On his knees Carlos pleads with the Queen:

Was I n'er in this posture seen before?  
 Ah can your cruel heart so soon resign  
 All sence of these sad sufferings of mine?

(II, 230-233)

Although he is fully aware that he should obey his father and that the Queen will grant him no favours, Carlos insists on some sign of her love. The Queen must reprove him:

If e're you lov'd me you would this forbear;  
 It is a Language which I dare not hear.  
 My Heart and Faith become your Fathers right,  
 All other passions I must now forget.

(II, 245-248)

Carlos knows that he cannot be satisfied with a simple token of the Queen's affection, but will be driven to beg for more. Yet, in his despair he even accuses the Queen of cruelty:

Retir'd! and did she then  
 Just show me Heaven, to shut it in agen?  
 This little ease augments my pain the more;  
 For now I'm more Impatient than before,  
 And have discover'd Riches, make me mad.

(II, 308-312)

Carlos is even driven so far as to intervene directly between his father and the Queen, and further incur the wrath of the King.

Throughout Don Carlos the possibility of happiness is denied. Despair is the only possibility, as the Prince finds that



happiness with the Queen is elusive:

How difficult's the path to happiness!  
 Whilst up the Precipice we climb with pain,  
 One little slip throwes us quite down again.

(II, 278-280)

The result for Carlos is that he must see his father enjoy the happiness which has been denied him. That the King never does enjoy his Queen adds to the pessimism of the play, but does not lessen Carlos' conviction that his plight is like hell:

Make my self happy! bid the damn'd do so;  
 Who in sad Flames, must be for ever tost,  
 Yet still in view of the lov'd Hea'on th'ave lost.

(II, 322-324)

Carlos is aware that there is no hope of ever attaining the Queen, and finds that he is left "Alone, a naked wanderer to shift" (III, 442). His despair is so complete that he easily recognizes that he cannot save himself:

Thus long I wander'd in Loves crooked way,  
 By hope's deluding Meteor, led astray:  
 For e're I've half the dang'rous desart crost,  
 The glimm'ring lights gone out, and I am lost.

(III, 515-518)

Happiness is possible for Carlos only in death: "Thus all o're bliss the Happy Carlos dyes" (V, 447).

Each time Carlos moves against love he weakens; similarly he is unable to reconcile himself completely to disobedience. In the attempt Carlos spends much time arguing against the demands of obedience calling it an artificial virtue not worthy of respect:



Curse! What's obedience? a false Notion made  
 By Priests, who when they found old Cheats decay'd,  
 By such new Arts kept up declining Trade.

(I, 14-16)

It appears that much of the play is spent justifying Carlos' disobedience. The King is shown as a tyrant, taking a perverse delight in forcing him to celebrate the wedding which should by all rights have been Carlos'. As the King's tyranny becomes more manifest, especially in his harsh treatment of the Queen, disobedience seems to be a more attractive and justifiable alternative. Even the virtuous Posa only hesitates slightly when Carlos suggests joining the rebels. Nevertheless, Carlos is not able to deny the duty he owes: "Father! and King! both names bear mighty sence." (IV, 16). Although Carlos himself counters this argument with "Yet sure there's something too in Son, and Prince" (IV, 17), it is not convincing.

Disobedience becomes more attractive, too, as it becomes increasingly obvious that no matter how virtuously Carlos behaves, Gomez will ensure that his behaviour is misconstrued by the King. There is no doubt left in an audience's mind about the complete control Gomez has over the King; nor is there any doubt as to his motives, or his hatred for Carlos. Gomez is ambitious, and goaded on by Eboli, he is determined to have the kingdom for himself. The obvious misdirection of the King makes Carlos' actions appear virtuous. Love becomes a positive force, demanding satisfaction. Still Carlos' real virtue works against him, and he is unable to become a rebel. He deludes himself into believing that the King cannot mis-interpret his devotion to the Queen as disobedience and allows himself to be



caught in the compromising position of visiting the Queen in her chamber.

Once the King has become aware of his error, and the Queen and Carlos are dying, Carlos makes a speech which deprives love of the validity it has achieved in the process of the play. It is Carlos' last major speech and, as it negates most of the arguments which he has used to justify his behaviour, it is extremely significant:

I was a wicked Son, Indeed I was;  
 Rebel to Yours as well as Duties Laws.  
 By head-strong will too proud to be confin'd;  
 Scorn'd your Commands, and at your Joyes repin'd.  
 When to my love your Royal Claim was layd,  
 I should have born my Inj'ries and obeyd;  
 But I was hot, and would my right maintain,  
 Which you forgave; yet I rebell'd again,  
 And nought but death can now wash off the stain.

(V, 406-414)

This passage must not be dismissed as purely rhetorical or as a formalized confession. It is too strategically placed as Carlos' only major speech in the last act not to have considerable dramatic effect. Nor is it ironic; Otway has already prepared his audience to accept the words of the dying as sincere: "Heav'n! she was sensible that she should dye/ And durst not in the minute tell a lye" (V, 261-262).

Thus, Carlos is caught between two virtues which both demand service. Because he is too honourable to repudiate obedience and because he cannot forsake love, he is destroyed. Carlos' virtue also contributes to his destruction, in that it is his honour which leads him to refuse Eboli, who reacts in anger and is the direct





cause of Carlos' final downfall.

Carlos' concern about: "How we are bandied up and down by Fate" (I, 136) is even more relevant in considering the Queen. Like Carlos, she faces an irreconcilable conflict, hers being between love and obedience to her husband. In her case the situation is even more pathetic, for she is an innocent victim drawn into the conflict by political maneuvering, which has paid no attention to her own desires:

'Twas Interest and Safety of the State;  
Interest that bold Imposer on our fate:  
That alewaies to dark Ends misguides our wills,  
And with false happiness smooths o're our illls.

(II, 193-196)

The Queen chooses obedience, as she appears more aware of the dangers: "there to my mind appears/ Something that in me moves unusual fears" (II, 215-216); but she, too, is unable to reject love completely. Thus, although she protests that Carlos goes too far: "Nay you too far encroach/ I fear I have already giv'n too much" (II, 275-276), she is unable to deny him the signs of her love that he seeks. The Queen becomes the victim, not only of the King's jealousy, but of Carlos' love. The lovers work at cross purposes and can be united only in the deaths which they bring on one another.

Throughout the play virtue reaps no rewards. The only characters with any sense of honour, Carlos, the Queen, Posa and the King, are destroyed. The King must be included in this group, for he too is Gomez's victim. Like Shakespeare's Othello, he is destroyed by jealousy, which in his case arises out of the sense of sin



that accompanied his marriage. His guilt is reflected in the opening scene, as he obsessively demands that Carlos rejoice in his wedding. By the end of the play the King is fully aware of his error and of Carlos' virtue: "Why wert thou made so excellently good;/ And why was it no sooner understood?" (V, 415-416); it is this awareness which destroys him.

It is the Queen's naïve belief in virtue and honour which leads to her downfall. More than any character, she believes that honour is always recognizable and will triumph. It is in this belief that she take Carlos into her chamber:

In my Apartment farther we'll debate  
Of this; and for a happy issue wait.  
Your presence there he cannot disapprove,  
When it shall speak your Duty and my Love.

(IV, 392-395)

In her innocence the Queen can only wonder when she finds that Eboli's words are believed where hers were not: "Can you to think me Innocent Incline/ On her bare word, and would not credit mine?" (V, 299-300).

Posa's death is almost a superfluous catering to the audience's zeal for violence and blood, except that it further illustrates the complete lack of justice in the play. Posa is the King's most faithful servant, yet he is murdered as the pander to the Queen and Carlos. Posa is the antithesis of Gomez, but still he falls victim to that villain.

In the end a certain measure of justice is achieved as Eboli and Gomez both die for their treachery; but it is not a satisfying justice. Although there are human causes of the action



of the play, even without them the tragedy is still inevitable. This is evident in the gloom of the opening scene. The tragedy has already occurred; it has now only to resolve itself. Eboli and Gomez are catalysts; fate is the cause. All that is left is the amoral libertine Don John, who can do nothing but wonder at the chaos which has been created: "Despair! how vast a triumph hast thou made" (V, 500).

The pessimism of The Orphan is created in a different manner from that of Don Carlos. Instead of providing the hero with a situation from which there is no honourable escape, in The Orphan Otway places Castalio in a situation where honour and justice are totally irrelevant to the tragedy. Castalio is not a hero but a weakling who is destroyed partly by his own weakness, but largely by accidents and fate. He appears to be caught in a conflict between love and friendship with his brother; but real as the conflict appears to him, it does not exist. Friendship and love make no contradictory demands on Castalio. If he were to provide the duty he owes to both virtues, the tragedy would be avoided. The situation demands strength, and Castalio, with whom it is extremely easy to identify, is not strong.

In that the tragedy arises out of the weakness of the hero, The Orphan fits the conventional definition of tragedy more accurately than Don Carlos, but Castalio is too pathetic and lacks the stature of a tragic hero. Castalio has not just one tragic flaw but a series of weaknesses, all manifested in his extremely poor judgement. The Orphan is a domestic tragedy in that it is concerned with ordinary people and not with Kings and Princes. Thus Castalio's weakness is acceptable in this context, but its result is an extremely negative comment on,



and hopeless appraisal of, man's ability to cope with fate. Castalio's weakness is first seen in his refusal, or inability, to assert his claim to Monimia. Instead of admitting to Polydore his intention to marry Monimia, Castalio leads his brother to believe that his own intention is equally as dishonourable as Polydore's. Castalio also refuses to tell his brother of the favourable reception he has had from Monimia. Instead Castalio wishes Polydore success -- "Love her still;/ Win, and enjoy her" (I, 154-155). Far from protecting Monimia from Polydore, Castalio exposes her to his advances. The warning to Polydore not to be unjust in his courtship will protect Castalio but not Monimia:

I was, and should have met her here again;  
 But th'opportunity shall now be thine;  
 Myself will bring thee to the Scene of Love;  
 But have a care, by Friendship I conjure thee,  
 That no false Play be offer'd to thy Brother.  
 Urge all the pow'rs to make thy Passion prosper,  
 But wrong not mine.

(I, 183-189)

It is inconceivable that Castalio could be unaware of the danger to which he is subjecting Monimia. He has himself denied the honour of his intentions in order to appear on equal footing with Polydore. Even Monimia is fully aware of Polydore's nature and tells him that she is: "Well, my Lord Polydore, I guess your business,/ And read the ill-natur'd purpose in your eyes" (I, 297-298). The treacherous nature of Castalio's denial is expressed by Monimia:

Then am I ruin'd: if Castalio's false,  
 Where is there Faith or Honour to be found?





Ye Gods, that Guard the Innocent, and guid  
The weak; protect and take me to your care.  
Oh! but I love him.

(I, 270-274)

Later Castalio has his treachery thrown back at him as he is repulsed at Monimia's door. He is mistaken for Polydore sent by Castalio:

My Ladies answer is, you may depart,  
She says she knows you; You are Polydore,  
Sent by Castalio as you were to day,  
T'affront and do her violence again.

(III, 537-540)

Castalio's second major failing is his inability to trust Polydore with the knowledge of his marriage to Monimia. In not so doing he betrays the code of friendship which is expressed in his promise to Polydore: "Have I a thought my Polidore should not know?" (I, 117). Polydore's violation of Monimia is the direct result of Castalio having kept his thoughts from him. Polydore is fully justified in upbraiding his brother: "Ah Castalio, was that well done?" (V, 349). Castalio acts knowingly in keeping his secret and with full knowledge of the seriousness of his disloyalty. Although he justifies it to himself, he is unable to convince the viewer or reader of the necessity for secrecy:

'Twas not well done to trifle with my Brother.  
I might have trusted him with all the secret,  
Open'd my silly heart and shewn it bare:  
But then he loves her too; but not like me,  
I am a doating honest Slave, design'd  
For Bondage, Marriage bonds, which I've sworn  
To wear: It is the onely thing I e're  
Hid from his knowledge; and he'l sure forgive  
The first Transgression of a wretched Friend  
Betray'd to Love and all its little follies.

(II, 310-319)



These "little follies" have far more serious consequences than Castalio imagines. Polydore, despite his libertine values, remains too honourable to willingly commit incest, which he now commits unknowingly:

Hadst thou Castalio, us'd me like a Friend,  
This ne're had happen'd; hadst thou let me know  
Thy Marriage, we had all now met in Joy.

(V, 431-433)

There is little, if any, valid justification for Castalio's having kept his marriage secret. There is some opposition from his father who speaks of marriage as "the last mad thing ye doe" (III, 88) and expresses regret when he hears that Castalio and Monimia are married: "I'm sorry for't" (IV, 313). However, neither of these constitute real opposition. In the first case the emphasis should be on the "mad" while the second statement is inconsistent with Acasto's feelings towards Monimia and with his behaviour when he learns of the marriage; it can therefore be dismissed. The decision to secrecy, lacking a meaningful motive, is simply another error on Castalio's part, resulting from his inability to face his brother. It is because the betrayal of both friendship and love result from weakness and unmotivated behaviour that Castalio appears so pathetic and the play so pessimistic. The only sign of what can be called strength in Castalio is his suicide and even this is a dubious indicator. In Don Carlos suicide has been dismissed as the conclusion of fools: "Talk not of death, for that ev'n Cowards dare/ When their base fears compel e'm to despair" (III, 220-221). Instead of a hero, the audience is faced with the common Castalio.



In order to appreciate the complicated nature and the completeness of Otway's pessimism, it must be understood that Polydore is not a total villain. Much is done to show the equality and similarity of the two brothers. They are introduced as equals:

They're both of Nature mild, and full of sweetness.  
They came Twins from the Womb, and still they live,  
As if they would go Twins too to the Grave!

(I, 37-39)

The first scene between them is intended to reinforce their moral equality. There is a definite pattern showing their similarity. In keeping with his character as a rake, Polydore can be prodded by Cordelio:

Monimia sigh'd and blusht, Castalio swore;  
As you my Lord, I well remember did  
To my young Sister in the Orenge-Grove,  
When I was first perfer'd to be your Page.

(II, 11-14)

But the balance is maintained as Cordelio can also chide Castalio in a like manner: "Oh! but you promis'd me last time I told you what Colour my Lady Monimia's stockings were of and that She garter'd them above knee ..." (III, 464ff). Cordelio also reports that Castalio would oft "call me pretty Boy,/ And ask me what the Maids talkt of at Nights" (II, 405-406). The effect of the moral equality of Polydore and Castalio, is to a certain extent to raise Polydore, but it also brings Castalio down further. The result of both effects contributes to the negative aspects of the play, for now the differences between good and evil are almost non-existent and both are punished.



Thus even Polydore's punishment has elements of injustice.

The Orphan provides nothing to replace the weak Castalio and Polydore. Chamont, when he first appears, is presented as an alternative to Castalio. This is especially evident in his denial of the Court, to which Castalio and Polydore aspire:

I have no business there,  
I have not slavish Temperance enough  
T'attend a Fav'rites heels, and watch his smiles,  
Bear an ill office done to my Face,  
And thank the Lord that wrong'd me for his favour.

(II, 114-118)

Here Chamont echoes Acasto, but it soon becomes obvious that Chamont is no more attractive than either of the twins. The original contrast, with Chamont's implied superiority, serves only to emphasize his total inadequacy when it becomes evident. Chamont is a bully who terrorizes his sister and the chaplain, and finally affronts Acasto. Chamont is cruel; his sense of honour is strangely perverted to the point where he ceases to have any concern for the people involved. This is especially true of the scene in which Monimia tries to tell him of Castalio's cruelty. She has finally to protest his insistent threats:

Nay, now Chamont, art thou unkind as he is.  
Didst thou not promise me thou would'st be calm?  
Keep my disgrace conceal'd? why should'st thou kill him?  
By all my Love this Arm should do him Vengeance.

(IV, 256-259)

Acasto is morally the alternative to all the young would-be heroes of the play. He has rejected both the camp and the Court, apparently wisely. Although it is true that the rigid manner in which





he imposes his own experience on his sons makes him appear to be something of a pedant, and his formal speech to his sons after he has been stricken ill is such a strange mixture of good and bad advice that Polydore can dismiss it with "old men always talk thus" (III, 137), Acasto remains the most admirable character. But even he is unable to transcend the evil fortune that plagues his house. Despite his virtue, he, too, is humbled by the experiences; he is left in total confusion, another victim of fate.

Acasto accurately blames his cruel fate for the tragedy that has afflicted his house:

Sure some ill Fate is towards me, in my house  
I only meet with oddness and disorder;  
Each Vassal has a wild distracted face;  
And looks as full of business as a block-head  
In times of danger.

(IV, 263-267)

Monimia's reaction when Polydore tells her that it was he, and not Castalio, who spent the night in her arms is similar to Castalio's: fate is blamed. Monimia in her distress curses nature:

Let mischiefs multiply! Let every hour  
Of my loathed life yield me increase of Horror!  
Oh let the Sun to these unhappy eyes  
Ne're shine again, but be eclips'd for ever!  
May every thing I look on seem a prodigy,  
Forget I ever had Humanity,  
And grow a curser of the works of Nature!

(IV, 402-409)

Monimia, although she curses fate, is also aware that it is a useless pursuit. She resigns herself to its workings telling Castalio, "Heav'n has decreed, and therefore I've resolved" (IV, 278).



Castalio is more definite in blaming fate. "Our destiny," he says, to Polydore, "contriv'd/ To plague us both with one unhappy Love" (V, 340-341). Once he is aware of what has happened on his wedding night Castalio refuses to blame Polydore, arguing instead, "And all this is the work of my own Fortune" (V, 441). Castalio's final words to Monimia indicate his complete acceptance of the role of fate in the tragedy: "Oh I'm the unhappy wretch whose cursed Fate/ Has weigh'd thee down into destruction with him" (V, 458-459).

This cursing of fate is not simply the gratuitous rant of a character who is too weak to accept the responsibility for the results of his actions. The role of fate in the tragedy is extremely important, for the main cause is not Castalio's weaknesses but an accident, an overheard conversation. A tragedy cannot be based on such an accident, as Otway must have been aware, unless the intention is to indicate that the real villain is fate. Castalio's weakness only makes him more sympathetic as a victim of this fate.

The villainy of fate is especially terrible to Monimia, whose situation is carefully contrived to arouse the sympathy of the audience. She is, of course, an orphan, but also one who so fears her fate that she wishes she were dead:

Sure some ill Fate's upon me,  
Distrust and heaviness sit round my heart,  
And Apprehension shocks my timorous Soul.  
Why was I not lain in my Peaceful Grave  
With my poor Parents? and at Rest as they are?  
Instead of that I am wand'ring into cares.

(I, 205-210)

Instead of finding a haven in Acasto's house, Monimia is subjected to



the rude advances of Polydore. Monimia in her concern over her plight echoes the words of Don Carlos when she fears that she is "Thrust out a naked Wanderer to the World" (IV, 343). There is no justice in the fate which Monimia meets. She is virtuous, and good; an innocent whose suffering can be accounted for only by the cruelty of fate.

The above speech of Monimia's is one of many which help create the foreboding atmosphere which contributes to the negative message of The Orphan. Chamont's dream, in which he sees Monimia caressed by two wanton lovers, is so accurate that the play takes on an extremely dark air even at that early point. The dream gives the catastrophe an air of inevitability. The same is true of Acasto's illness, which coincides with Castalio's and Monimia's marriage. Its significance is especially obvious, when it is learned that Monimia herself felt a strange fear during the ceremony:

Castalio, I am thinking what we've done.  
 The Heavenly Powers were sure displeas'd to day!  
 For at the Ceremony as we stood,  
 And as your Hand was kindly joyn'd with mine,  
 As the good Priest pronounc't the Sacred Words,  
 Passion grew bigg, and I could not forbear,  
 Tears drown'd my eyes, and trembling seiz'd my Soul.

(III, 266-272)

Chamont has also felt an evil foreboding in the marriage. He finds the secrecy dangerous:

Whats the cause  
 I cannot guess, though 'tis my Sisters Honour,  
 I do not like this Marriage.  
 Hudl'd i'th' dark and done at too much Venture:  
 The business looks with an unlucky Face.

(III, 252-256)



The conclusion of The Orphan offers no lightening of the heavy atmosphere created by the cruelty of fate. The result is the deaths of Polydore, Castalio and Monimia. Acasto, the only source of hope through the play, faints in confusion, and Chamont is left on the stage, querying "the means by which the Fates have plagu'd us" (V, 528), but unable to find any cause for hope in the events which he has witnessed:

'Tis thus that Heaven it's Empire does maintain,  
It may Afflict, but man must not Complain.

(V, 529-530)

Any consideration of Otway's masterpiece, Venice Preserv'd must be mindful of the dual nature of the play. On one hand it is a political tract satirizing the Whigs, especially Shaftesbury. J.R. Moore has shown<sup>2</sup> how closely Venice Preserv'd is related to the political situation in England in the years 1678-1682. This aspect of the play will be treated more fully in the next chapter. The other aspect of the play is the tragedy to which the satirical and political elements form the background.

It is mainly Venice Preserv'd which leads commentators such as Stroup to classify Otway's works as "satiric tragedy." Yet this play, like Don Carlos and The Orphan before it, is treated unjustly by such a classification. The tragedy which enfolds Jaffeir, Belvidera, Pierre and even Priuli has nothing satiric about it. It arises out of the humanity of these characters, and not out of the foolish whims, or even the more serious insincere politics, of the Antonio and Renault characters. The tragedy, as in the earlier plays,





is the result of the human plight, and not of anything over which man can ever hope to exercise control.

Ostensibly in Venice Preserv'd the tragedy arises mainly from Jaffeir's inability to control his emotions as he is caught between the conflicting services demanded by love and by friendship. The demands that both these virtues make are moral, but because they are also contradictory, they are destructive. Caught in a situation similar to that, which destroyed Don Carlos, Jaffeir vacillates from one virtue to the other. In the attempt to serve both, he serves neither. Not that it matters all that much anyway, the tragedy is only superficially based on Jaffeir's lack of resolution. Even if he had remained completely true to one virtue or the other Jaffeir would have been destroyed. The only escape was to have remained in a position where he could serve both virtues, and there the result would have been honourable but sure starvation.

Jaffeir's only fault is that he is too honourable and too heroic to allow his Belvidera to starve. Thus when Pierre comes and offers Jaffeir the opportunity to revenge himself on his father-in-law, Jaffeir accepts the offer. At no point during his involvement with the conspirators does Jaffeir ever consider the altruistic aspect of the venture: justice for the people. As Pierre seeks to bring Jaffeir into the conspiracy, he finds that he is unable to move Jaffeir by describing how

our Senators  
Cheat the deluded people with a shew  
Of Liberty, which yet they ne'r must taste of.

(I, 153-155)



Instead Jaffeir reacts to Pierre's loss of Aquilina and is finally goaded to action by the lurid and emotionally charged description of Belvidera's eviction. The selfish nature of Jaffeir's commitment is clearly visible when he describes to Belvidera the reason for giving her as a hostage: "I've bound my self by all the strictest Sacraments,/ Divine and humane," he tells Belvidera, "To kill thy Father" (III, ii, 138-139). To Jaffeir the purpose for overthrowing the existing government is not the establishment of justice, but rather the creation of a new hierarchy with the conspirators at the head. He consoles Belvidera:

When next we meet, I'll lift thee to a height,  
Shall gather all the gazing World about thee,  
To wonder what strange Virtue plac'd thee there.

(II, 407-409)

There is nothing in Jaffeir's behaviour with the conspirators that contradicts the impression created by his oath to Pierre: "By Sea and Air! by Earth, by Heaven and Hell,/ I will revenge my Belvidera's Tears!" (I, 297-298).

By joining the conspiracy to revenge himself on Belvidera's father, Jaffeir knows that he is contravening the laws of love and nature; he sees himself as "A Dog, that comes to howl/ At yonder moon" (II, 79-80)<sup>3</sup>. He compounds his transgression by offering Belvidera as a hostage. That Jaffeir believes in the virtue of the plot can be accounted for only by his affection for, and implicit trust in, Pierre.

When Jaffeir comes to reject the conspiracy, he acts again not out of political, but out of personal, reasons. The description of Renault's attempted rape of Belvidera:







promise, and the doom is completed by another broken promise, that of the Senate. But even had he remained part of the conspiracy, Jaffeir would have been condemned by the rapine and murder which would have ensued. In both cases Jaffeir believes that he is acting honourably. He is betrayed first by Pierre, who leads him into an evil conspiracy, and then by Belvidera, who leads him to the evil Senate.

Jaffeir is caught in a situation that he cannot resolve honourably or morally. There is evil in the Senate and perhaps an even greater evil in the conspiracy. Jaffeir's final decision is precipitated by Renault's bloodthirsty speech to the conspirators. Now Jaffeir finally sees the evil in the plot:

Heav'n! where am I? beset with cursed Fiends  
That wait to Damn me: What a Devil's man  
When he forgets his nature.

(III, ii, 302-304)

Jaffeir makes several speeches about nature which "communicate to us his sense of being unfinished, his bafflement over the disparity between his mind and his fate, his sense that human destiny may be quite separate from any moral or even intelligible pattern of experience"<sup>4</sup> Jaffeir sees both sides of nature. It is nature that created Belvidera:

Can there in Woman be such glorious Faith?  
Sure all ill stories of thy Sex are false  
Oh Woman! Lovely Woman! Nature made thee  
To temper Man; We had been Brutes without you.

(I, 335-338)

But nature is also responsible for Jaffeir's fate, thus earning the





rebuke "Is this just dealing, Nature?" (I, 315). Jaffeir finds himself "undone by Fortune" (I, 357), and blames his dilemma on fate. The words "fate" and "fortune" appear forty-nine times in the course of the play, nowhere more effectively, or more fatalistically, than in Jaffeir's anguished cry, as he gives the Senate the list of the conspirators: "Now Fate thou hast caught me." (IV, 177).

Jaffeir's dagger symbolizes his vacillation from Pierre to Belvidera. When he surrenders it with Belvidera, he surrenders his manhood. He regains control of his manhood only when he uses that same dagger to save Pierre from the shame of being executed as a traitor. Only by killing himself does Jaffeir gain control of his own fate. The triumph is hollow and is paid for at an extremely great price. Jaffeir is unable to distinguish between the good and the evil that mark the ambivalent world in which he lives. Because the separation of good from evil cannot be achieved, Jaffeir loves too honourably to avoid destruction. He loves the good in both Belvidera and Pierre, but he fails to comprehend the evil.

Even Belvidera is not the ideal she has often been regarded to be. It is true that she sees through the sham of the conspirators: Renault has shown her good reason to mistrust them. There is also some merit in her refusal to allow Jaffeir to participate in a conspiracy that would kill her father. However, the value of this action is placed in doubt by the results which it has on Jaffeir. In regard to Jaffeir, Belvidera's virtue and goodness seems to be questionable. She is quick, almost eager, to find fault in Jaffeir's treatment of her. She readily believes that Jaffeir is capable of deserting her:



Part! must we Part? Oh! am I then forsaken?  
 Will my Love cast me off? have my misfortunes  
 Offended him so highly, that hee'l leave me?  
 Why dragg you from me? wither are you going?

(II, 383-386)

Belvidera is unable to recognize the nature of Jaffeir's predicament or his emotions, instead she believes the worst of him. Belvidera remains insensitive to Jaffeir's emotions even when she leads him to the Senate. She is incapable of understanding the concept of personal honour. To Jaffeir's passionate cries of anguish she remains strangely unsympathetic. Jaffeir tells her:

take me Belvidera  
 And lead me to the place where I'm to say  
 This bitter Lesson, where I must betray  
 My truth, my virtue, constancy and friends:  
 Must I betray my friends? Ah take me quickly,  
 Secure me well before that thought's renewed  
 If I relapse once more all's lost forever.

(IV, 72-78)

Belvidera only replies selfishly, "Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera?" (IV, 79). To Jaffeir's accusation that she has led him to forget "his Manhood, Virtue, truth and Honour" (IV, 17), Belvidera only replies, "Oh inconstant man!/ How will you promise? how will you deceive?" (IV, 19-20).

Belvidera believes that Jaffeir is capable of cruelly murdering her. As she pleads with Priuli to use his influence to save Pierre's life, she is still unaware that she is also pleading for Jaffeir's life. She believes that in causing Jaffeir to betray the conspirators to the Senate she had led him to honour, and not away from it: "Where are we wandering?", "To eternal Honour" (IV, 4). Her plea to Priuli



is for her own life and shows no comprehension of the danger to Jaffeir:

Yes kill me; when he pass'd his faith  
And covenant against your State and Senate,  
He gave me up as hostage for his truth,  
With me a dagger and a dire commission,  
When e're he failed, to plunge it through this bosome;  
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love  
T'attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour;  
Great love prevail'd and bless'd me with success,  
He came confest, betray'd his dearest friends  
For promis'd mercy; now they're doomed to suffer,  
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,  
If they are lost, he vows t'appease the Gods  
With this poor life, and make my bloud th' attonement.

(V, 80-92)

Like Belvidera Pierre is unable to completely understand Jaffeir's motives, nor is he able to understand his own. Even though Pierre's reason for joining the conspiracy is at least partly the result of Antonio's having claimed "priviledge" in order to take Aquilina from him, Pierre is unable to comprehend the force of love on Jaffeir. Encountering Jaffeir and Belvidera on the street Pierre answers Jaffeir's challenge:

A Friend that could have wisht  
T'have found thee otherwise imploy'd: What, Hunt  
A Wife on the dull foil! sure a stanch Husband  
Of all Hounds is the dullest? wilt thou never,  
Never be wean'd from Caudles and Confections?

(III, ii, 218-222)

Pierre is an idealist who is blinded by his cause. To a certain extent Pierre's reasons for joining the conspiracy are selfish and best summed up by the phrase "A Souldier's Mistress Jaffeir's his Religion" (I, 199); but Pierre is aware of the other, more authentic,



reasons that really justify the overthrow of the Senate, in a way that Jaffeir and the other conspirators are not. As a result of his idealism Pierre is unable to see the evil inherent in the conspiracy. Even when he learns of the attempted rape of Belvidera, Pierre refuses to accept the evil. Jaffeir is disillusioned by Renault's blood-thirsty speech to the conspirators, but Pierre accepts it, believing that the good of the cause is important enough to justify murders.

Pierre is undoubtedly sincere in his refusal to ask forgiveness for his sins. He believes that he has always acted in good faith:

I tell thee Heaven and I are friends  
I ne'r broke Peace with't yet, by cruel murthers,  
Rapine or perjury, or vile deceiving.  
But liv'd in moral Justice towards all men.

(V, 375-378)

Pierre is unaware that he has been guilty of planning all the crimes he here denies and that Jaffeir's betrayal is all that saved him from committing them. Pierre's violent rejection of Jaffeir when he learns of his betrayal is not the result of his being disillusioned about his cause or even about the nature of his co-conspirators. It is his firm belief in his companions that makes him so bitter towards Jaffeir whom he has protected. Pierre dies believing in his cause and taking delight in the delusion that he and Jaffeir "have deceiv'd the Senate" (V, 468). Pierre's ideology confronts human weakness; and because the ideology blinds him, Pierre is destroyed by the human weakness with which he cannot cope because he does not recognize it.

The destruction in Venice Preserv'd is complete; all triumphs are futile. Man in this play is faced with inevitable defeat.







Pierre's joy at having deceived the State is pathetic, as he remains deceived about his conspiracy; Jaffeir is finally exonerated, but at the price of Belvidera's suffering, insanity and death. Throughout the play honour is presented as an ideal, but it is never maintained. All the characters who show any sense of virtue are destroyed, leaving behind only the treacherous Senate.

Venice Preserv'd may have served as a warning to the Whigs against rebellion, but the reason for the warning's effectiveness is not the virtue of the State, but rather the futility of attempting to achieve virtue when confronted with the arbitrary nature of fate. Even the reform of Priuli is futile, at the moment he repents his entire family is destroyed. He is left holding the stage warning others, but unable to offer any advice:

Sparing no Tears when you this Tale relate,  
 Bid all Cruel Fathers dread my Fate.

(V, 516-517)

Otway's tragedies offer no hope of escaping the traps set by fate. The human dilemma is that man is impotent when faced by a situation which he cannot understand. Yet, the individual caught in the destructive situation is rarely responsible for it himself. Otway sees man as the arbitrary victim of somebody else's actions: Don Carlos is the victim of his father, who in turn is victimized by Rui-Gomez; Castalio and Monimia are the victims of Polydore, who himself is misled by Castalio; Jaffeir is caught between service to an evil Senate and an equally evil conspiracy. Jaffeir is doomed by Pruili, Belvidera and Pierre, all of whom are in turn destroyed



by him. Otway sees this evil in fate and recognizes that it cannot be escaped.



## CHAPTER IV

As we have seen, most Restoration tragedies concern themselves with worlds far removed from Restoration England. The worlds they describe are, at their most objective, idealizations or glamorizations of the country their authors knew, ideals to be emulated at a less objective level, and never - never lands at their least. Otway's fatalism, however, is not simply a philosophical theory related only to the abstract worlds of his tragedies. The inability of man to control his fate, which Otway's plays illustrate, is the same inability which he saw in his own life and in the lives of those around him. It is true that Otway's plays are set in strange, often faceless, countries: Spain, Bohemia, and Venice; but these are only thin disguises for Restoration London.

The accuracy of Otway's treatment of human nature and of the human situation makes his tragedies more realistic than most Restoration tragedy. Otway was also deeply convinced that the society in which he moved was marked by the same arbitrary control of fate. In order to convey this conviction, Otway had to make his plays sufficiently lifelike to convince his audience. They had to be easily related to the real world. The method Otway chose to give his tragedies impact and verity was, paradoxically, the use of comic elements; that is, elements which are normally found in Restoration comedy and not tragedy. Restoration comedy, we have seen, is and was generally considered to be more realistic than tragedy. Otway, by using some of the conventions of comedy, sought to illustrate that the world he saw as controlled by fate was his own



world, the real world.

Situations better suited to comedy, stock comic characters, rakish dialogue that would suit a Horner, or a Wishfort, or a Millamant, are the comic elements in *Otway* which provide the reader, and almost certainly provided the Restoration audience, with a sense of truth, which the usual rant and rhetoric of tragedy of that period can never convey. *Otway* utilizes characters whose values are identifiable with the values of the characters of comedy, and by extension, with those of the audience. As a result these characters are accepted and credited, and the pessimism of *Otway's* tragic vision is given an authenticity that might otherwise be lacking.

It is not unlikely that *Otway's* ability to write a tragedy replete with comic elements was responsible for the great success and popularity of Don Carlos. The play satisfies that part of the audience which demanded the glorification of women and love, but does not ignore that part which could be pleased only by the intrigues of a rake.

Much of the scheming in Don Carlos comes from the Don John-Eboli-Rui-Gomez triangle. The triangle is reminiscent of the basic situations of many Restoration comedies. Gomez is easily identifiable with the stock buffoon. He appears as the victim of a scheming wife; but he is a deserving victim. Early in the play, Gomez, in describing his tutorship of Don Carlos, unintentionally but effectively characterizes himself as a pedant rather than as an intelligent tutor:

'Twas I the charge had of his tender years,  
And read in all the Progress of his growth  
An untam'd, haughty, hot and furious Youth;  
A Will unruly, and a Spirit wild,  
At all my precepts still with scorn he smil'd.

(I, 163-167)





Only a short scene with Gomez and Eboli intervenes between this speech and the scene in which Don John and Eboli agree to cuckold Gomez. Gomez's horns are highly ironic as he earns them while trying to convince the King that he is in danger of being cuckolded: "Whilst I was busie grown/ In others ruines, here I've met my own" (IV, 443-444).

This short scene, which intervenes between the illustration of Gomez's pedantry and his cuckoldry, is concluded by Eboli's declaration of her intention to deceive her husband. Her speech would be appropriate to almost any female character in Restoration comedy about to deceive her husband, espousing as it does, physical love as an ideal:

No, though all hopes are in a husband dead,  
 Another path to happiness I'll tread,  
 Elsewhere find Joyes which I'm in him deny'd:  
 Yet while he can let the slave serve my pride.  
 Still I'll in pleasure live, In Glory shine:  
 The gallant Youthful Austria shall be mine.  
 To him with all my force of Charms I'll move;  
 Let others toyl for Greatness: whilst I love.

(I, 229-236)

Love, however, is not the best word to describe Eboli's emotions. Ambition or pride would be far more accurate. To her Don John is a second or third best. Her first choice was the King, but when frustrated by his marriage she contents herself with Don John until she finds the opportunity to offer herself to Carlos. Once rejected her bitterness increases:

Neglected! scorn'd! by Father and by Son;  
 What a malicious course my Stars have run?



But since I meet with such unlucky Fate  
In love; I'll try how I can thrive in hate.

(IV, 101-104)

Despite the viciousness of Eboli's reaction to her rejection by Don Carlos she is well aware that love is of secondary importance to her and that she is a libertine. She says of Don John:

H' has reapt his Joys, and now he would be free,  
And to effect it puts on Jealousie.  
But I'm as much a Libertine as He.  
As fierce my will as furious my desires.  
Yet will I hold him; Tho' enjoyment tyres,  
Though Love and Appetit be at the best;  
He'll serve as common meats fill up a Feast;  
And look like plenty though we never taste.

(IV, 240-247)

Eboli is not the model Restoration woman, even as drawn in the comic conventions of Restoration theatre. She is too free and too possessive to be really worthy. Thus it is not inconsistent or incongruous that Don John discards her in favour of Henrietta. Also expected is her vicious behaviour when she is rejected. Her defeat is merited and expected, and although cruel in terms of comedy, does not destroy the comic pattern. Don John is left with the more deserving woman.

Don John is typical of Restoration comic heroes. He is amoral, or even immoral, in love; and he is deeply concerned with the restrictions placed on nature, and thus natural behaviour, by law: "Law was an Innovation brought in since,/ When Fools began to love Obedience" (II, 7-8). Don John adheres only to the philosophy of the rake:



How vainly would dull Moralists Impose  
Limits on Love, whose Nature brooks no Laws:  
Love is a God, and like a God should be  
Inconstant: with unbounded liberty  
Rove as he list.

(III, 1-5)

The resolution of Don Carlos is in terms of comic convention. The fools and the all-too-willing woman are defeated while the rake and his heroine are left unmarred, and, if not triumphant, undefeated. The comic form of the resolution is emphasized by the Epilogue in which a "Girle" possibly event Henrietta, with her threat to "turn Nun" wittily appeals to the rakish element of the audience: "But I may grow in love with some of you" (Epil., 14).

The effect of this assertion of Restoration values is not comic, however. That the comic hero is left undefeated is not the result of any virtue on his part but purely coincidental. Don John's survival is not solely at the expense of Gomez and Eboli, but also of Carlos and the Queen. Don John, it is true, was able to see the virtue in Don Carlos, but this is obviously not sufficient reason for his survival: Posa was equally aware of Carlos' virtue.

The comic subplot with its immorality serves to emphasize the virtue of the main characters who are also involved in a comic triangle. The jealousy of the King, especially because it is irrational, characterizes him as a comic butt. In this case, however, the result is tragedy. The King, to avoid being cuckolded, carries the precautions of a Pinchwife too far: he murders his own son and wife.

The pessimism of Don Carlos is greatly enhanced by the inevitable comparison of its triangle with those of popular



Restoration comedy which provide for the success of the worthy lovers. The comparisons made with the triangle of the subplot also illustrate the injustice of the final dénouement. The Queen is far superior to Eboli, although also involved in an unwanted marriage; and Carlos is superior to Don John. Yet it is Don John who survives. Fate has not rewarded the deserving.

Don John is aware that he has not triumphed. His last lines reveal a reform that has been effected by the tragedy:

No more in Loves Enervate charms I'll fly,  
Shaking off softness, to the Camp I'll fly;  
Where the Thirst of Fame the Active Hero warms,  
And what I've lost in Peace, regain in Arms.

(V, 501-504)

This speech is the only element that suggests any catharsis in the play. Yet it, too, is futile. Don John is fleeing to a life similar to one he has seen end in despair and destruction.

Don John's and Eboli's espousal of the Restoration rake's creed of love shows the tragedy takes place in a world easily recognized as Restoration London. The theatre audience is faced with Don John at the end. There is no reason to reject him, he has done no harm, and yet to accept him completely is to reject what Carlos stood for. The values Don John stands for must be rejected, because they too are inadequate to cope with the situation, as Don John recognizes in his conversion speech. There is nothing left to hold on to, nothing to assert; even the ethics of the Restoration are helpless in face of the dilemma.

The setting of The Orphan is easily understood to be Restoration





England. The constant talk of the Court and of loyalty to the King, and the reference to the war in Flanders ("Now half the Youth of Europe are in Arms" (I, 99)) all emphasize the actual location of the action and deny the Bohemian setting. It is, therefore, not surprising to find the characters of the play adhering to values and customs that are definitely English and typical of Restoration comedy. The tragedy proceeds from the adherence to these values. This is not to deny the influence of an arbitrary fate, but rather to emphasize the realism of its workings. The fact that the characters accept actual Restoration ideals and that these ideals are largely responsible for the action does not lessen the effect of fate, although it may seem logical to assume that it does. Otway is merely showing that even the most favoured attitudes and modes of behaviour of his day can be the tragic victims of fate. The Orphan, based as it is on these attitudes, illustrates the reality of what Otway saw as man's plight.

Acasto, in whose home the tragedy occurs, is clearly the Restoration Cavalier who has long served the King. Although he rejects the Court, he still finds the King worthy of his highest praise:

He is so good, praise cannot speak his worth;  
 So merciful, sure he ne're slept in wrath;  
 So just, that were he but a private man,  
 He could do not wrong.

(II, 123-126)

Acasto's rejection of the Court is based on the dishonesty and treachery that are found there. This attitude towards the Court is similar to the comic hero's rejection of false wit and foppery. Acasto demands truth not flattery:



No flattery Boy! an honest man can't live by't;  
 It is a little sneaking Art, which Knaves  
 Use to Cajole and soften Fools withall;  
 If thou hast flattery in they Nature, out with't,  
 Or send it to a Court, for there 'twill thrive.

(II, 15-19)

It is made very clear that Acasto has rejected only the foppery and treachery, and not those ideals which would suit a comic hero. His speech to his sons, presented as formal death-bed advice, is heavily influenced by fashion and a rejection of the conventional morality that would bind a Restoration rake:

Let Marriage be the last mad thing ye doe,  
 For all the Sins and Follies of the past.  
 If you have Children, never give them knowledge,  
 'Twill spoil their Fortune, Fools are all the Fashion  
 If y'ave Religion, keep it to your selves.

(III, 88-92)

This speech seems to be contradicted by his advice to Chamont once he learns of Chamont's desire to marry Serina. In this speech he warns of the dangers of the libertine life:

But keep the Eyes from wandring, man of frailty,  
 Beware the dangerous Beauty of the wanton,  
 Shun their enticements; Ruin like a Vulture  
 Waits on their Conquests: Falsehood too's their business,  
 They put false Beauty off to all the World;  
 Use false endearments to the Fools that love 'em,  
 And when they marry, to their silly Husbands  
 They bring false Virtue, broken Fame and Fortune.

(III, 128-135)

This speech is, despite its moral warning, a further avowal of the double standard accepted by the Restoration hero -- namely, that there is no harm in cuckolding, but much in being cuckolded. What



morality there is here is motivated by Acasto's concern for his daughter. He seeks to protect her honour by ensuring the loyalty of her husband. Polydore, the libertine, simply dismisses this morality: "old men always talk thus" (III, 137).

There is no doubt that Polydore is a libertine and a rake. He prizes only vulgarity and sensuality in women. Virtue he finds "peevish":

Hence with this peevish Virtue, 'tis a cheat,  
And those who taught it first, were Hypocrites.  
Come, these soft tender Limbs were made for yielding.

(I, 331-333)

Polydore finds Monimia's rejection of him "Intolerable Vanity" (I, 340). The contempt in which he holds women is consistent with his rakish attitudes. He is, however, fully justified in his belief that Monimia has deceived him. He believes that she yields to Castalio on the same conditions by which she rejected him:

Find out some Song to please me, that discribes  
Womans Hypocrisies, their subtle wiles,  
Betraying smiles, feign'd tears, inconstancies,  
Their painted outsides, and corrupted minds,  
The sum of all their follies, and their falsehoods.

(III, 30-34)

Monimia is aware of the rakish qualities not only of Polydore but of all men. Early in the play she admonishes Cordelio who has admitted being embarrassed by her breasts:

Oh men for flattery and deceit renoun'd!  
Thus when y'are young, ye learn it all like him,  
Till as your years increase, that strengthens too,  
T'undo poor Maids, and make our ruin easie.

(I, 226-229)



In this way Monimia is typical of the pursued heroine of Restoration comedy. She is aware of all the tricks a man can use, and knows the baseness of his intentions:

In this peopled World of Beauty, where  
There's roving Room, where you may Court, and ruin  
A thousand more, why need you talk to me?

(I, 315-317)

Monimia so completely accepts this role of man that she can accuse Castalio of the same deceitfulness. Thus, even while she is testing him ("Yes, I will try him, torture him severely" (II, 299)) and playing the required female role herself, she upbraids him:

Oh the bewitching Tongues of faithless men!  
'Tis thus the false Hyaena makes her moan,  
To draw the pitying Traveller to her Den;  
Your sex are so, such false dissemblers all,  
With sighs and complaints y'entice poor Womens hearts,  
And all that pity you, are made your Prey.

(II, 332-337)

Castalio also accepts the game. Once he has been denied entrance to Monimia's chamber he accuses her of having played with his affections and deprived him of his freedom:

And farewell all that's just in Woman!  
This is contriv'd, a studyed Trick to abuse  
My easie nature, and torment my mind;  
Sure now sh' has bound me fast, and means to Lord it,  
To rein me hard, and ride me at her will,  
Till by degrees she shape me into Fool  
For all her future uses.

(III, 544-550)

Even before this event Castalio regards marriage with something of the





rake's outlook. Although he seeks the marriage he acknowledges it in terms that show it as an undesirable state:

I am a doting honest Slave, design'd  
For Bondage, Marriage bonds, which I've sworn  
To wear.

(II, 314-316)

The complete acceptance of the libertine ethic makes it impossible to condemn Polydore for his success. His suicide is not an incongruous event; instead, it is a recognition that he has been brought to dishonour, from no dishonourable intention. Beside Castalio's desire to marry Monimia, Polydore's desire to seduce her may perhaps appear reprehensible. It is not. As the ward of his father Monimia is not a suitable partner in marriage for Polydore, or for that matter Castalio. Both brothers are duty bound to seek a marriage that would increase their fame and their fortunes. As Monimia can do neither, it is Castalio who is deviating from the norm, a fact which he readily acknowledges when he denies that he has any intention of marrying Monimia:

Wed her!  
No! were she all desire could wish, a fair  
As would the vainest of her Sex be thought,  
With Wealth beyond what Woman pride could waste,  
She should not cheat me of my Freedom, Marry?  
When I am old and weary of the world,  
I may grow desperate  
And take a Wife to mortify withall.

(I, 158-165)

With this speech Castalio also acknowledges that Monimia is open to seduction. Any woman is fair game to the rake in comedy, and the situation here is basically the same. Chamont is himself well aware



of the dangerous situation in which Monimia is placed. He fears that "her weakness/ will make her pay a debt at any rate" (II, 183-184). His dream in which he sees Monimia caressed by two wanton lovers clearly depicts the situation.

This recognition of Monimia's vulnerability justifies Polydore's actions. That he is thus delivered into incest only emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the fate that has led him into it. If the desire to seduce Monimia is not dishonourable, and marriage to her is unorthodox, Polydore cannot be considered guilty. Castalio at no point regards Polydore's ambitions toward Monimia as reprehensible. He admits that Polydore "loves her too" (II, 313), and is more concerned with having lied to Polydore than he is with Polydore's immorality. Seen in terms of this appraisal of the situation, there is nothing incredible in Castalio's leaving Monimia exposed to Polydore's advances.

The tragedy, therefore, arises out of the adherence to the code of love that marked Restoration comedy. This is especially obvious if the Polydore-Castalio-Monimia characters are considered as forming a comic triangle. But, the cuckolding of the husband instead of being comic and intentional, is unintentional, incestuous and tragic!

The values that do not succeed in averting the tragedy, but abet it considerably, are those of the Restoration rake. Castalio in playing the libertine before his brother denies any claim he has to Monimia and allows Polydore to attempt to seduce her. That Polydore resorts to a ruse only indicates his ingenuity and not his depravity.

A.M. Taylor has also pointed out that all the antecedents of



the deceived lover are in comedies "where the purpose is to laugh a victim out of countenance."<sup>1</sup> The effect in The Orphan is to the contrary. The comic elements have led up to the point that a practical joke, because of a man's weakness, is turned by fate into a tragedy, a tragedy that lurks behind, but is denied by, almost every Restoration comedy.

A comedy could easily be made out of the situation in which Chamont becomes the foolish protector of Monimia's honour. Otway characterizes Chamont in such a manner as makes identification with the deserving cuckold of comedy easily achieved. Chamont sees the danger of the suitors, but while he concerns himself with one, the other does the damage. But it is not funny. The marriage of Castalio and Monimia, the act of virtue in the modern reader's eyes, is turned by fate into the event that creates the tragedy.

In Venice Preserv'd the comic element enhance not only the tragic elements of the play, but also make the satire more effective. The attack on the Senate is made partly through the cruelty of Pruili, but most obviously through the character of Antonio. The scenes between Antonio and Aquilina, known as the "Nicky Nacky" scenes, have several purposes in the play, their end result being an illusion, or the creation of an illusion, of reality.

These scenes are marked by the depravity of Antonio, and in this way contribute to the political satire. The evil in Antonio, is the evil in Shaftesbury; but in this play it is also the justification of the plot. The depravity of Antonio is Pierre's spur to action, and because of Renault's similar immorality, it makes Jaffeir's dilemma



completely ambiguous. Antonio, when contrasted to Jaffeir or Pierre, illustrates their morality and the purity of their passions.

But the Nicky-Nacky scenes serve other purposes. They provide, occurring as they do following highly emotional scenes, a comic relief. The moral contrast these scenes provide exists effectively only on a second take, on reconsideration. The farcical nature of the scenes is on first appearances comic. Otway's intention in these scenes was to provide comic reinforcement for the realistic nature of the play.

In his article entitled "Contemporary Satire in Venice Preserv'd,"<sup>2</sup> J.R. Moore has shown just how closely the play can be related to the political situation in London in, and prior to, 1682: "It is against the party of Shaftesbury that every line of contemporary satire in Venice Preserv'd is directed. The Popish Plot is attacked or belittled -- in the Prologue as a fraud, in the play itself as a thing of no consequence. Parliament, dissolved by the King the previous year, is held up to scorn."<sup>3</sup> Given this kind of clear relationship between the satire and the lives of the audience, the Nicky-Nacky scenes can easily be seen as intended to bring the play closer to the audience. Once again the setting becomes Restoration London. In his Prologue Otway insists that the audience accept the play in this manner:

Shew me, all London, such another man,  
Match him at Mother Creswolds if you can.  
Oh Poland, Poland! had it been thy lot,  
T'have heard in time of this Venetian Plot,  
Thou surely chosen hadst one King from thence,  
And honour'd them as thou hast England since.

(Prol., 32-37)







Otway reiterates this demand in the Epilogue by calling for "Application" and advising the audience that some will have been offended by the play: "And there's a certain Faction fain would sway,/ If they had stength enough, and damn this Play" (Epil., 5-6).

The satire in the play forces the audience to consider the play in terms of its own society. This sense of reality is enhanced by the use of comic elements to give the characters and the situation immediacy. In an article entitled "Otway's Tragic Muse Debauched: Sensuality in Venice Preserv'd." <sup>4</sup> William McBurney illustrates how the characters in Venice Preserv'd can be identified, and even matched, with the characters in Otway's previous play, the comedy The Soldiers Fortune: "From this comic success Otway turned to the composition of Venice Preserv'd. Writing for the same audience and for the same actors, he understandably adapted to the purposes of his tragedy specific characters and situations which had been proved on the stage." <sup>5</sup>

Antonio, characterized as a depraved lover, is the buffoon of comedy. Although the comic triangle is perverted in this play by the fact that it is Pierre who is cuckolded by Antonio instead of conversely, the situation maintains its comic element because Aquilina remains in love with Pierre. Antonio's "privilege," which Pierre violates, becomes the equivalent of the marriages violated by the rakes of comedy.

The reaction of Aquilina to Antonio serves not only to characterize him as a comic fool, but also to show her as the London lady of fashion. Her attitude to Antonio "echoes a long succession of



discontented young wives of Restoration comedy:"<sup>6</sup>

The worst thing an old Man can be's a Lover,  
A meer Memento Mori to poor woman.  
I never lay by his decrepit side,  
But all that night I ponder'd on my Grave.

(II, 27-30)

Aquilina confesses that she is a libertine as she admits she tolerates Antonio only to get his money. She knows "he has already made me Heir to Treasures" (II, 37). As well as being a libertine, Aquilina makes attempts at wit which are meant to illustrate her identity as a comic heroine. As Antonio scatters gold for her to pick up she tells him: "Truly, my Illustrious Senator, I must confess your Honour is at present most eloquent indeed" (III, i, 65-67). If this wit falls short of the high wit shown by some of the heroines of comedy, the fault is in Otway's talent and not in his intention.

As the comic hero rejects the would-be wit, similarly Pierre rejects Antonio, dismissing him as a corrupt fool. Pierre finds fault with Aquilina's relationship with Antonio for exactly this reason of Antonio's foppery:

No: There's Fool,  
There's Fool about thee. When a Woman sells  
Her Flesh to Fools, her Beauty's lost to me.

(II, 3-5)

The immorality of the situation does not concern him at all. Pierre also has a rake's attitude to marriage: "I hope a man may wish his Friends wife well,/ And no harm done!" (II, 95-96). McBurney points out that Pierre and Jaffeir resemble Polydore and Castalio,<sup>7</sup> who have already been shown to be Restoration characters.



Jaffeir is not so clearly the Restoration rake that Pierre is. Yet, there are elements in his manner that suggests he is not a stranger to the rake's ethic. His bantering exchange with Pierre shows them both to be wits. To Jaffeir's statement "Pierre, how that damn'd starving Quality/ Call'd Honesty, got footing in the World" (I, 123-124), Pierre replies:

Why, pow'rfull Villainy first set it up,  
For its own ease and safety: Honest men  
Are the soft easy Cushions on which Knaves  
Repose and fatten: Were all mankind Villains,  
They'd starve each other.

(I, 125-129)

Jaffeir's speech also reflects something of a rake's manner. When he refuses to swear an oath to Pierre he remarks parenthetically, "Green-sickness Girls lose Maiden-heads with such Counters" (II, 142). Several speeches of Jaffeir's and Belvidera's are highly sensuous in tone. The result is that it becomes impossible to treat them as the exalted characters of tragedy; in fact Lord Byron denounced Belvidera as "that maudlin bitch of chaste lewdness."<sup>8</sup> They are more easily identified with the lifelike characters of comedy.

A second comic triangle in the play involves Jaffeir, Belvidera, and Renault. The results of this triangle are finally the cause of the tragedy. If the play is seen in terms of comic convention, the attempted rape of Belvidera is not only not surprising, but expected. At a midnight meeting in the house of a courtesan, Jaffeir introduces Belvidera, who is probably dressed in a night-gown. In comedy it would only be expected that Renault should avail himself of the opportunity to try Belvidera's virtue.



Renault, who is also a parody of Shaftesbury, replaces Antonio as the unwanted lover. He, however, poses a much more dangerous threat. Jaffeir's fate is sealed by Renault practising the libertine code of Restoration England.

There are two other important comic elements in the play, which, although they do not enhance the realism, should be noted, as they emphasize the tragedy. The first is the comic nature of the title, Venice Preserv'd. The plot against the state is discovered, the plotters are condemned and executed, and the state is saved. But, the maintenance of the state does not constitute a happy ending, as there is no doubt that its destruction is desirable. That the alternative is equally unacceptable is a function of Otway's pessimism, and the main point of his tragic vision.

The second comic element is the manipulation of Jaffeir's dagger. Standing as it does for Jaffeir's masculinity it becomes a crude joke. Jaffeir finally uses it to redeem his honour, but not before it has been thoroughly debased by the scene in which Aquilina threatens Antonio with death unless he saves Pierre. Threatened with a dagger Antonio "dies" at Aquilina's feet in a fashion that is purely farcical. Because of the dagger, Jaffeir in his degradation becomes morally equatable with the depraved Antonio. It is with relief that the audience sees Jaffeir finally use the dagger for a noble purpose.

In his article McBurney implies that Venice Preserv'd has to be "saved" from its comic elements.<sup>9</sup> Quite the contrary is true. The tragedy is enhanced by the realistic workings of the comic elements. They bring the play closer to the audience, a fact which McBurney acknowledges when he recognizes the "atmosphere of universal decadence"<sup>10</sup> which marks the play.







The comic elements of all three of the plays discussed are extremely prominent. They add a dimension of reality, a sense of relevance which must be acknowledged if the validity of Otway's tragic vision is to be fully appreciated. They also show that Otway wrote "different play[s] from the emasculated and sentimentalized creation[s] of the eighteenth century."<sup>11</sup>



## CHAPTER V

Otway's popularity during his own lifetime and in the years immediately after his death was probably the result of the immediacy and relevance with which he was able to convey his tragic vision. From his first play, Alcibiades, where Patroclus finds that "Now fortune has her utmost shown" (V, 532), to The Atheist, where Beaugard asserts that "all this comes by the Dominion Chance has over us" (V, 1040-1041), Otway persistently illustrates man's inability to control his own fate.

It is significant that two of the greatest minds among Otway's early critics were both impressed with the truth of his work. Dryden found that "nature is there,"<sup>1</sup> and Johnson said that Otway created "by consulting nature in his own breast."<sup>2</sup> Critics have generally interpreted these remarks as referring only to Otway's treatment of the passions; but if they are considered closely, it can be seen that something more was intended. There is no distortion of Dryden's or Johnson's evaluations, if they are interpreted as references to Otway's understanding of, and sympathy for, man's tragic plight. This is especially obvious in Dryden's comments, as he treats the passions separately, before praising the presence of "nature" in Otway's works.

The absolute nature of Otway's acceptance of the complete dominance of fate makes his works extremely pessimistic. The plays offer no hope, no glimmer of light by which man might be able to purge himself of his fear. Instead the viewer (today the reader) is left to search for reasons and explanations on his own, but with



the knowledge that a satisfactory conclusion cannot be found. The wheel may have come full circle, but it is clearly about to go around again.

The conclusions of Otway's plays lack the decisiveness of most tragedy.<sup>3</sup> There is no sense of completeness or of termination. Don John is left with his decision to seek honour in the field, a futile pursuit. Chamont sets out to find the means by which fate is able to control man, an equally futile search; and Pruili warns that what happens to him will happen to others, hardly a cause for hope.

The characters of the three plays discussed in this study, because of Otway's use of the devices of Restoration comedy, are identifiable with those people the members of his audience would have seen around them, especially in the theatre. Otway's women are not enskied ideals who bear little resemblance to the Restoration woman, but rather human and believable dramatizations of Restoration ladies of fashion. The Queen in Don Carlos is the weakest of the three heroines. It is not surprising that it is she who most closely approximates the type-heroine of Restoration tragedy. Nevertheless, even she is shown to be extremely sensuous and incapable of controlling her emotions and exercising discretion when confronted with fate. The Queen, Monimia and Belvidera are all extremely sensuous -- in Monimia's case, to the extent that she has been called "smutty and sometimes prophane."<sup>4</sup> It is unlikely that the Restoration would have found her so. Like the Queen, Belvidera errs in her judgement; she is incapable of understanding Jaffeir's commitment to Pierre. So like the heroes, the women are destroyed by fate. They die without ever fully understanding the reasons for their destruction. They remain human, thus weak and vulnerable.



William McBurney has noted that "in both The Orphan and Venice Preserv'd ... virtuous characters are given speeches of more specific sensuality than can easily be found outside of contemporary comedy."<sup>5</sup> Heroes and heroines alike are marked by this concern with sex that seems to belong to the comedy rather than the tragedy of the age. Hugging and embracing are central actions in all three plays considered in this study, but especially in Venice Preserv'd where at least thirty embraces are indicated by the text.

Otway's tragedies are also marked by a series of triangles which end in destruction. Love can exist happily in isolation but once a third party becomes involved tragedy ensues. As isolation is not the norm of human existence, tragedy then becomes inevitable. Otway takes care to depict the intrusions of the third parties in terms that make them completely in accordance with Restoration morality. There is nothing that the Restoration viewer would have found surprisingly vicious in Polydore, the King, Pierre, or even Renault. Otway's villains are not drawn all in black; they, too, are complex people, rather than simple symbols of evil. It is clear that Otway saw no villains other than fate. Characters act according to accepted modes, but fate, having perverted the circumstances, causes tragedy.

Otway's tragedies "show a surprising use of type-characters patterns of action, erotic imagery and diction, and an almost clinical preoccupation with sexual behaviour which were largely, in the Restoration, restricted to the comic stage."<sup>6</sup> The effect of this use of comic devices is to add to the pessimism of Otway's works. The characters who suffer at the hands of fate are not alien, unbelievably good (or evil),





fanciful dramatic creations, but are the dramatic presentations of lifelike people with an authentic problem, an uncontrollable and arbitrary fate.

The heroes are caught because they cannot decide between two duties. They are placed in ambiguous situations, having to decide not between good and evil, or even between good and more good, but between two equal goods. The perversity of the dilemma is the clearest manifestation of Otway's pessimism. There are no solutions to the dilemmas, and there is no escaping fate.

This pessimism which is so clear in Don Carlos, The Orphan and Venice Preserv'd, is clearly opposed to the usual optimism of Restoration tragedy. Otway's heroes do not survive the tests of fate, but are crushed by them. Restoration comedy, if not as optimistic as tragedy, is at least ambivalent enough to allow some room for hope. The comic writers never challenge their world openly; they stop short of showing it to be futile. Otway does better than go one step further than comedy; he goes several steps. He explodes the myth that proper behaviour, wit, or even virtue, can help man to achieve control over his life. Castalio's last words summarize Otway's final nihilistic evaluation of man: "I now am --- nothing" (V, 526).

It is easy enough to understand the emotional causes of Otway's pessimism which arises directly from the many catastrophes that plagued his life. His constant need of money and his disappointment in love probably led him to despair of ever being happy in life. Otway's plays have clearly biographical elements. Many critics have felt that love affairs in his plays are glorifications of the love he felt for the woman to whom his love letters are addressed. But Otway's pessimism is not simply a pure emotional response to his own



life. If it were, the pessimism would hardly be as complete as it is. Otway's despair is not focused only on the hero and the heroine; fate is in control of all the world depicted in Otway's play. Otway is not trying to arouse sympathy for certain people caught in an irreconcilable dilemma, but is concerned with all men.

This pessimism marks Otway's earliest works, and even Titus and Berneice, which followed directly after his great success with Don Carlos, leaves little cause for optimism. Otway's conviction is sincere and complete. He is not simply trying to "make the world's as wretched as I am" (Titus and Berneice, III, 479).

By depicting tragedies which arise out of the actions and morals of characters who are clearly only dramatizations of Restoration Englishmen, Otway is disintegrating the life he saw around him. He is denying the value of the life that so many found not only to be acceptable, but to be desirable. It is this integrity and courage in his work that make Otway unique as a writer of Restoration tragedy. He looks behind the facade of fine or virtuous behaviour and elegance and sees the sordid truth: man is a puppet of fate.

It is impossible to over-emphasize the completeness of Otway's pessimism. Only in Don Carlos is there hope of life beyond death. By The Orphan Otway has ceased to hope for even this as Monimia dies saying "Tis very dark: Good night" (V, 470), and Castalio dies with "I now am --- nothing." Venice Preserv'd, despite the appearance of ghosts, sees no reward for the just or virtuous. Jaffeir has redeemed himself on the human level, but his last words indicate no salvation: "I am sick---I'm quiet" (V, 478).



Otway's vision of fate's absolute dominion over man gives his work a truly tragic dimension. It encompasses the belief that man's attempts to achieve control of his life are futile, for in the end he must die. Otway has seen the tragedy of life. His genius lies in this ability to perceive the plight of man; his greatness should be in his ability to convey that vision. Unfortunately Otway is not a great poet; and so he is ignored or dismissed. Only in Venice Preserv'd is the poetry sufficiently refined to allow for Otway to be considered among the leading dramatists of the English language. In the Restoration less emphasis was placed on poetry; and Otway was judged on, and acclaimed for, his ability to convey his ideas dramatically. His use of comic devices allowed him to combine the best qualities of tragedy and comedy to create totally convincing but depressing drama.

Modern criticism has often attempted to show the tragic basis of Restoration comedy.<sup>7</sup> Otway's tragedies by their use of comic devices prove the point of this criticism. In fact, Otway's genius would be far more greatly appreciated if his works were considered in conjunction with those of Wycherley, Congreve, or Etherege rather than with the tragedies of his period. Here comparison is valid, and here it is possible to see his genius and to appreciate that Otway belongs to his age. McBurney states, "only his particular age and temperament could have produced the combination of conventions of heroic drama and bitter comedy."<sup>8</sup> Otway did not write fatuous fairytales; instead, by looking beyond Congreve and Etherege, Otway created great tragedy, and probably the only true Restoration tragedy.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER I

- 1 Thomas Otway, The Works of Thomas Otway ed. and intro. J.C. Ghosh (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1932) Don Carlos, Epistle Dedicatory, 27-34. All future references to the plays shall be to this edition and will be made within the text by act and line number. References to Ghosh's introduction will be by page number.
- 2 *ibid.*, 15.
- 3 *ibid.*, 39.
- 4 *ibid.*, 42.
- 5 *ibid.*, 44.
- 6 *ibid.*, 45-46.
- 7 *ibid.*, 55.
- 8 *ibid.*, 29. Quoted from "To Julian, A consolatory Epistle."
- 9 *ibid.*, 29. Quoted from "A Supplement to the late Heroick Poem."
- 10 *ibid.*, 50.
- 11 John Dryden, Of Dramatic Poesy, ed. George Watson (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1962), 201.
- 12 Quoted by Aline MacKenzie Taylor, Next to Shakespeare (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1950), 251.
- 13 Taylor, 252.
- 14 British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books (London: 1963), CCLXXVII, 190-198.
- 15 Taylor, 254.
- 16 Bonamy Dobree Restoration Tragedy, (1660-1720) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), 141.
- 17 R.G. Ham, Otway and Lee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), 146.
- 18 Malcolm Elwin, The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928).
- 19 Taylor, 264-65.





<sup>20</sup> Elwin, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Note the title of Mrs. Taylor's book.

<sup>22</sup> quoted by Taylor, 270.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 269.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, 267.

<sup>25</sup> Ham, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Dobrée, 148.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER II

- <sup>1</sup> James Sutherland, English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1969), 3.
- <sup>2</sup> Joseph Wood Krutch, Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 26.
- <sup>3</sup> Sutherland, 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Comedy (1660-1720) (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), 20.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 20.
- <sup>6</sup> Krutch, 25.
- <sup>7</sup> Sutherland, 35.
- <sup>8</sup> Montague Summers, The Restoration Theatre (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1934), 67.
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 67.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 78.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 97.
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 68.
- <sup>13</sup> Samuel Pepys, quoted by Sutherland, 36.
- <sup>14</sup> Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, John Warrington ed., (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1953), II, 411.
- <sup>15</sup> Sutherland, 26.
- <sup>16</sup> Summers, 75-76.
- <sup>17</sup> Sutherland, 27.
- <sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 35-36.
- <sup>19</sup> Krutch, 44.
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 44.
- <sup>21</sup> Anne Richter, "Heroic Tragedy" in J.R. Brown and B. Harris eds., Restoration Theatre (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1965), 138.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, 135.
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, 138.



- 24 Sutherland, 46.
- 25 Bonamy Dobrée, Restoration Tragedy (1660-1720), 92.
- 26 The facts of Otway's life are from Ghosh pp. 1-38. This is the best summary of Otway's life, with the exception of his complete acceptance of Mrs. Barry as the person to whom Otway's letters were addressed.
- 27 Ghosh, 25.
- 28 Downes quoted by Ghosh, 12.
- 29 Earl of Rochester quoted by Ghosh, 15.
- 30 Thomas Otway, "Love Letter VI," Ghosh, II, 481.
- 31 *ibid.*, "Love Letter I," Ghosh II, 475.
- 32 *ibid.*, 476.
- 33 *ibid.*, "Love Letter II," Ghosh, II, 478.
- 34 *ibid.*, "Love Letter IV," Ghosh, II, 480.
- 35 *ibid.*, "Love Letter VI," Ghosh, II, 481.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER III

- <sup>1</sup> Thomas B. Stroup, "Otway's Bitter Pessimism" in Essays in Literature of the Classical Period edited by D.W. Patterson and T.B. Stroup. SP, Extra Series, 1967, 54-75.
- <sup>2</sup> J.R. Moore, "Contemporary Satire in Otway's Venice Preserv'd," PMLA, XLIII (1928), 166-181
- <sup>3</sup> Dog imagery is especially important in the play, as it is used to illustrate unnatural behaviour. This is especially evident in the Antonio-Aquilina scenes.
- <sup>4</sup> Ronald Berman, "Nature in Venice Preserv'd," ELH, XXXVI (1969), 534.





## NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- <sup>1</sup> Taylor, 10.
- <sup>2</sup> John Robert Moore, "Contemporary Satire in Otway's Venice Preserv'd," PMLA, XLVIII (1928), 166-181.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 168.
- <sup>4</sup> J.E.G.P., LVIII (1959), 380-399.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 383-384.
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 385.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 385.
- <sup>8</sup> quoted by McBurney, 394.
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 396.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 399.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 399.



## NOTES TO CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup> Dryden, 201.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Johnson, "Otway", Lives of the English Poets (Chicago: Stone and Kimble, 1896), I, 172.

<sup>3</sup> Stroup, 70.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, 264.

<sup>5</sup> McBurney, 393.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 381.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 381.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, 399.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BERMAN, Ronald. "Nature in Venice Preserv'd." ELH, XXXVI (1969), 529-543.
- BOND, Donald F. and George Sherburn. The Restoration and Eighteenth Century (1660-1789). New York: Appleton-Century-Crafts, 1967.
- CHASE, Lewis N. The English Heroic Play. New York: Russell and Russell, 1965.
- CONGREVE, William. Comedies. edited by Bonamy Dobrée. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- DEANE, Cecil V. Dramatic Theory and the Rhymed Heroic Play. London: Oxford University Press, 1931.
- DOBRÉE, Bonamy. Restoration Comedy (1660-1720). London: Oxford University Press, 1924.
- DOBRÉE, Bonamy. Restoration Tragedy (1660-1720). Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929.
- DRYDEN, John. Four Tragedies. edited by L.A. Beaurline and Fredson Bowers. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1667.
- DRYDEN, John. Of Dramatic Poesy. edited by George Watson. London: Dent, 1962.
- ELLENHAUGE, Martin. English Restoration Drama. Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1933.
- ELWIN, Malcolm. The Playgoer's Handbook to Restoration Drama. London: Jonathan Cape, 1928.
- ETHEREGE, George. The Man of Mode. edited by W.B. Carnochan. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.
- GOSSE, E.W. "Thomas Otway," Cornhill, First Series XXXVI (1877), 679-700.
- HAM, R.S. Otway and Lee. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931.
- HAUSER, David R. "Otway Preserv'd: Theme and form in Venice Preserv'd," SP, LV (1958), 481-493.
- JOHNSON, Samuel. Lives of the English Poets. 2 vols. Chicago: Stone and Kimble, 1896.



- KRUTCH, Joseph W. Comedy and Conscience after the Restoration. New York: Columbia University Press, [1924] 1949.
- MacKENZIE, Aline. "Venice Preserv'd reconsidered," Tulane Studies in English, I (1949), 81-118.
- MARSHALL, Geoffrey. "The Coherence of The Orphan," TSLL, XI (1969), 931-43.
- MARSHALL, Geoffrey. Themes and Structures in the Plays of Thomas Otway. Rice University, Ph.D. 1964.
- McBURNEY, William H. "Otway's Tragic Muse Debauched: Sensuality in Venice Preserv'd," JEGP, LVII (1958), 380-399.
- MOORE, John Rovert. "Contemporary Satire in Otway's Venice Preserv'd," PMLA, XLIII (1928), 166-181.
- NOEL, Rodin. Thomas Otway. London: 1888.
- OTWAY, Thomas. The Works of Thomas Otway. edited by J.C. Ghosh. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1932.
- OTWAY, Thomas. The Works of Thomas Otway. edited by Montague Summers. 3 vols. Bloomsbury: Nonesuch Press, 1926.
- PEPYS, Samuel. The Diary of Samuel Pepys. edited by John Warrington. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1953.
- RIGHTER, Anne. "Heroic Tragedy," in Restoration Theatre. edited by J.R. Brown and B. Harris. Stratford upon Avon Studies 6. London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1965.
- SANDERS, H.M. "Thomas Otway," Temple Bar, CXVIII (1899), 372-386.
- STROUP, Thomas B. "Otway's Bitter Pessimism," in Essays in Literature of the Classical Period. edited by D.W. Patterson and T.B. Stroup. SP, Extra Series 1967, 54-75.
- SUMMERS, Montague. The Restoration Theatre. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1934.
- SUTHERLAND, James. English Literature of the Late Seventeenth Century. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- TAYLOR, Aline MacKenzie. Next to Shakespeare. Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1950.
- WYCHERLEY, William. The Country Wife. edited by Thomas H. Fujimura. University of Nebraska Press, 1965.











**B29996**